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—
VOL. II.



C O N S T A N C Y

AND

C O N T R I T I O N .

S' onesto amor può meritar mercede,
E se pietà può quant' ella suole,
Mercede avrò.

PETRARCA.

The crime of old, which seemed long dead
Lifts up again its head!

THOUGHTS IN PAST YEARS.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

L O N D O N :

RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

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C O N S T A N C Y.

CHAPTER I.

There's not a virtue in the bosom lives
That gives such ready pay as patience gives.
That pure submission to the ruling mind,—
Fixed, but not forced—obedient, but not blind ;
The will of Heaven to make her own she tries,
Or makes her own to Heaven a sacrifice.
And is there aught on earth so rich, so rare,
Whose pleasures may with virtue's pains compare ?
This fruit of patience, this the pure delight,
That 'tis a trial in her Judge's sight.
Her part still striving duty to maintain,
Not spurning pleasure, not defying pain.
Never in triumph till her race be run,
And never fainting till her work be done.

CRABBE.

LADY SYLVESTER could by no means emulate the serenity which Mercedes displayed, nor bring her mind to contemplate tranquilly the utter disappointment of all her own plans, and she was actually cruel enough to feel aversion towards the unhappy orphan whose misfortunes had occasioned their overthrow. She had often been galled and

provoked by the weight of the fetters which she had imposed upon herself, by the constant parade of fondness which she had thought it expedient to display, and the necessity of acting with apparent disregard of self, and submitting to a compliance with Mercedes' wishes sometimes when in opposition to her own. Now that the call for restraint was removed, she seemed to seek revenge for her temporary submission to it, by indulging all the capricious, haughty tyranny of her nature; and her domestics were not so much the slaves of her captious whims as this unhappy girl, who was too sick at heart to summon up resolution to repel the encroachments daily made by her harsh protectress. She could not nerve herself to demand more respect or more consideration, but contented herself in silence with the little of either accorded her, and even that little became daily less. At length, however, this most miserable journey came to a close; and on their arrival in England Mercedes felt that her misery, if not relieved, would be varied.

Lady Sylvester could not refuse to the unprotected orphan who had so nearly become her daughter, an asylum in her house until some further provision could be made for her; but when she signified the favour which it was her intention to confer, she embittered it by pointing out at the same time the propriety of an immediate application to her nearest relatives, intimating that it was more fitting that she should be indebted to them for the relief of her present wants than any

longer burdensome to one on whom no ties of blood gave her any claim. Alas, poor Mercedes! she had but few relatives, and among them she felt that she had less right to look for friends than among her acquaintance, for her father had purposely kept her aloof from them. She shrank from the idea of seeking aid from those who perhaps had regarded him not even with cordiality. From the moment that she entered Lady Sylvester's house, she was made to feel the completeness of the change that had taken place with regard to her.

"I suppose that all my orders have been obeyed," said Lady Sylvester to the servant who received them; and turning to Mercedes, she added:

"There is a room up stairs prepared for you, Miss Ratcliffe; Croft will take you to it, and if you are fatigued," (the poor girl, trembling with emotion, as well as overcome with weariness, looked as if about to faint,) "you had better order something for yourself there, and not leave it again to-night."

Mercedes murmured her thanks, and clinging to the proffered arm of the servant (who regarded her altered person with an air of compassion, but into whose demeanour, by the very different mode of address employed towards Miss Ratcliffe by her mistress, to that which she remembered before their departure, was infused a familiarity bordering on disrespect,) allowed her to lead her to the chamber allotted her. The meanness of it, and its immediate vicinity to that occupied by her not unkind attend-

ant, spoke plainly to Mercedes that her presence would be endured ungraciously. This prediction was soon verified. The following morning Lady Sylvester, hearing that she had shewn no disposition to rise, visited her in her humble apartment, which she could scarcely enter without feeling some shame. She then, with an alacrity which she intended Mercedes to interpret as kindness, and to be consequently grateful for, declared her readiness to send her that very day to see her cousin Mrs. Johnson, whose name Lady Sylvester could now remember. But poor Mercedes only turned away her face to the wall, and murmured that she did not think that she should be able to reach her so soon.

“Perhaps you would like better to write to her?” asked Lady Sylvester, a little ashamed of her precipitancy, and adopting a more soothing tone.

Mercedes made no reply.

Her Ladyship waited awhile in silence ; her fertile brain soon marked out a plan of action.

“When you rise, my dear, you shall write a short note, of which I will myself be the bearer ; for I see that you had better remain perfectly quiet for the remainder of the day.”

Mercedes offered no opposition to the command contained in these words. Lady Sylvester left her ; but she felt far too ill to exert herself to rise, and for some time lay in a sort of drowsy stupor, which afforded her no refreshment, because though scarcely conscious, she was disquieted by a vague dreamy impression that there was something which

she must rouse herself to do. At last, with an effort, she raised herself, and rang the bell, though in the wretched state of dependance in which she now was, she scarcely dared to summon a domestic. The maid came; but not with all the speed with which the services required by Miss Ratcliffe had formerly been performed. From her she procured writing materials, and announced her arrival to her cousin in a note as brief, and as little supplicatory as she ventured to make it; she then, having first sealed it, sent it to Lady Sylvester, and sank down again on her pillow, which was soon moistened by the tears which this painful effort cost her. This application, though not made without most fervent prayers to Heaven for its success, inspired little hope of deriving any comfort from it. Mercedes remembered well that all intimacy between her cousin and herself had been checked by her father, on account of the glaring vulgarity of manner that offended him, while she herself shrunk from coming into contact with an equal vulgarity of mind and sentiments, of which, undisguised as it was by the polish of good breeding, she easily detected the existence. Mrs. Johnson had more than once indicated great dissatisfaction at the absence of familiarity between her and her cousins, who were of her own age, and had not scrupled to hint that she thought so near a relative should be more willing to bestow on them a share of those advantages which she enjoyed in a greater measure; and not discouraged, though displeased, by the coldness

with which Mr. Ratcliffe heard this species of remark, reiterated an always unsuccessful attempt to thrust her daughters upon Mercedes as companions : while she, without any feelings of pride or unkindness, in obedience to her father's wishes, and doing no violence to her own, uniformly resisted these bold advances, which, by their want of delicacy and dignity, little disposed her in favour of those who made them. It now remained to be proved whether Mrs. Johnson would be found most desirous to establish the cordiality of relationship between them, or most eager to retaliate the slights which she had received, and to escape the burden of the orphan's woes. Lady Sylvester took Mercedes' letter, and set out firmly resolved that her cousin, however disposed towards her young relative, should on no pretext refuse to receive her under her roof.

CHAPTER II.

Her look and mind
At once were lofty, and at once were kind.
There dwelt the scorn of vice, and pity too
For those who did what she disdained to do.

* * * * *

So fast, so faithful, loyal, and so true,
That a bold hand as soon might hope to force
The rolling light of Heaven, as change her course.

WALLER.

To find Miss Ratcliffe's cousin whom she had so readily undertaken to seek, Lady Sylvester had to bend her course further east than she was accustomed to do. On entering the handsome mansion in —— square, which the opulent banker's family now occupied, evident marks of affluence indicated that he was beginning to vie with all the pride of wealth in which Mercedes' father had indulged; but there was a total absence of the elegance and taste that had always distinguished every thing belonging to Mr. Ratcliffe. Nor was there a less striking difference between the deportment of the mistress of all this costly splendour, and the unobtrusive, and graceful manner peculiar to Mercedes. Mrs. Johnson, as soon as the name of her visitor reached her ear, was not altogether at a

loss to account for the honour thus conferred, and her manner was indicative of the perplexity of her mind, which was equally disturbed by the awe she felt in the presence of one so distinguished for all the haughtiness of rank and fashion; and by the eager desire to escape any responsibility or irksome duty, which it might be her Ladyship's object to impose upon her. A little in the back ground was seated one of her daughters, who, the moment that she discovered the purpose of Lady Sylvester's visit, rose with an air of interest; and, approaching them, took a seat beside her mother. There was something in the bright penetrating glance of her black eye, that told Lady Sylvester, that she would prove the arbiter of the question in debate, rather than her mother, who sat with Mercedes' letter in her hand, reddening with a confused mixture of feelings, and unable to recover herself from the embarrassment caused by the presence of one, whose commanding demeanour impressed her with respect. Her daughter, with an abrupt want of ceremony, took the letter, read it at a glance, and raising her large eyes full on her mother's face, said very quickly, in a clear, and not unmusical voice:

“Well, mamma, we must thank Lady Sylvester for having brought our poor cousin back to us; and we must seek her instantly, and bring her hither.”

Tears quenched the fire of her dark eyes as she spoke; but she seemed very averse to betray any emotion, and hastily brushed them away.

“My dear Cecilia,” replied her mother, in a querulous tone, that spoke her unwilling to acquiesce, and afraid to expostulate, “we must wait a little. Your papa, you know, is absent.”

“What then?” interrupted her daughter; “he will be so glad to find her here when he returns. When may she come?” she continued, turning to Lady Sylvester, without any manifestation of fear. “When may we fetch her? When may I see her?”

These interrogations were so much what Lady Sylvester wished, that she did not resent the tone in which they were made; but graciously replied:

“Indeed, I must not decline for Miss Ratcliffe the visits of any of her relatives, for I know she much wishes to see them.”

“Well, then,” said Miss Johnson, “let us order the carriage at once, mamma, and go to her.”

“You will find Miss Ratcliffe (she had not once called her Mercedes throughout the conversation) very ill; totally changed from what she was.”

“I have never seen her,” interrupted Cecilia.

“She had not risen from her bed when I left her.”

“Perhaps, then, she will not be able to remove hither yet?”

“Oh! so short a distance—and to be among her own family again will do her good,” replied Lady Sylvester, rising to depart. But as she said these words she remembered so vividly the pitiable state in which she had quitted Mercedes, that she

could not venture to allow her to be besieged with visitors. She reluctantly determined to retract the permission she had given, for she feared to occasion a recurrence of all her past tedious illness, and in consequence to be constrained to admit of her continuance under her roof. Not only that, but all these cousins would undoubtedly be ready while she was thus situated to bestow their time and attention upon her, and her house would be beset by a vulgar crowd. These timely reflections saved Mercedes, and her subtle wit suggested an amendment in her plan. Lady Sylvester addressed Miss Johnson with a stateliness of manner that left no room for dispute, saying :

“ On consideration, Miss Johnson, I think that your visit must be deferred till to-morrow ; unless, indeed, you would like to accompany me now. I would take you back in my carriage to your cousin, and your own could come at any time you desired. But more than one visitor, I fear that Miss Ratcliffe is unequal to receive.”

Cecilia's eyes sparkled with satisfaction at this proposal, which she most readily accepted. Perfectly aware how repugnant all her proposals were to her mother's preconcerted plans, with regard to her unfortunate cousin, which had been the subject of much family discussion, she gladly availed herself of this means of shelter from the impending storm that would have fallen on her head on the departure of their august visitor. When leaving the room to prepare to accompany Lady

Sylvester, she was seized with sudden dismay at the idea of the manner in which her mother might be disposed to entertain her during her absence. It was not impossible that she might strive to set her wit against her daughter's, to seek to throw obstacles in her way, and to thwart her designs. Against such dangers she promptly guarded by turning back, and saying with an earnestness that besought compliance :

“Dear mamma, will you come with me to my room, that I may learn how you would wish me to proceed without delaying Lady Sylvester more than is necessary. I am sure that her Ladyship will excuse your absence.”

Lady Sylvester bowed a ready acquiescence, and Mrs. Johnson silenced, baffled, and enraged, followed her daughter, who quickly betrayed how little real intention she had of consulting her. But though she rejected advice, to rebuke she was forced to listen. She heard it mutely, nor did its outpouring impede her progress. Her mother upbraided her with arrogance ; but Cecilia had for some time maintained a supreme rule at home, which was not to be overthrown in a day. In trifles she commonly won her way with good humour and smiles, but now she was inwardly chafed by her knowledge of her mother's sentiments, and of what her conduct would have been. ‘The very virtue of compassion’ was touched in her, and she regarded with impatient scorn the cold prudential motives, and the ebullitions of long-

harboured resentment, which retarded her mother's advances towards the unhappy orphan, whom she desired to see her receive with open arms. Burning with indignation, she could not stoop to make use of supplications and caresses, as she might have done on a lighter occasion. She was determined to take her own course, and to overpower all opposition. She knew that she could do so if she would, and had no fears of ultimate failure. As she completed her toilette, and snatched up her gloves to depart, she said hastily, speaking for the first time :

“I shall be back soon, mamma, and then I hope you will be pleased with what I have done. You must send the servant for me: I don't want the carriage. I shall bring you word when Mercedes will come. You must think where you will place her. She has been very ill, you know, so we must make her comfortable. How fortunate that the house is so empty and quiet just now! Margaret and Frederick both away! Let her be near me, mother, pray; here in Margaret's room if you please. Let me see,” she added, provokingly; “how is it we are related? I have heard you say so, many times, but not very lately. Oh! I remember, first cousin, once removed, is not that it? Good-by, I really must not make her Ladyship wait, must I? Have you any thing to say before I go? Don't give me messages, I can invent them.” So saying she hastily ran down stairs, and Lady Sylvester's carriage whirled

from the door before Mrs. Johnson, in great consternation, had reached her drawing-room in order to take leave of the most distinguished guest that had ever entered its doors. When she found it vacant she seated herself on the sofa and felt half-disposed to cry with anger and vexation. But this intended relief she was content to suspend on the entrance of another daughter, too awkward to appear before, but now coming with a face of wonder to know what had occurred, and how the apparition of a carriage with a Viscountess's coronet standing at their door for full half an hour, could be explained otherwise than supernaturally. It was some consolation to Mrs. Johnson to be able to pour forth all her grievances, doubts, difficulties, and demurs, without fear of contradiction; but her small opinion of the strength of Rose's understanding gave her discourse rather the character of a soliloquy, than of an appeal for sympathy or counsel.

“I never in my life knew such a girl as that Cissy. This comes of all the spoiling which she has had at home and abroad. To hear how she took upon herself—just as if she was sole mistress here; and how she spoke to her Ladyship, dictating to her, as much as to me! How she said this must be done, and that must not be done; and she must go there, and Mercedes must come here; and without the least bashfulness, I assure you, addressing herself to my Lady, who looked all the while as proud as Lucifer! She treated her with as little ceremony

as though she had known her as long and as intimately as her poor cousin has. And why did she come here? I think I can tell you that, though Cissy would fain make us believe all the world save herself to be as blind as moles. Why, just to push that poor thing off her hands, and to thrust her upon mine! And why this should be, I should like to know? I am sure there was little enough of affection shown to us by her father or herself during his lifetime: why should we support his child in beggary? Let her stay among the great friends for whom she left us. But it is of no use standing against Cissy, if she once sets her heart on a thing. Your father upholds her right or wrong. To be sure she is sensible and clever enough to find out the right generally, but then she has strange romantic notions, and is like no one else in this world, and is so headstrong; but after all, perhaps, it is better than being a poor, weak, thing without sense or spirit," said Mrs. Johnson, casting a look of contempt on the vacant staring countenance of the girl who had listened to this long tirade, appearing all the while quite at loss to comprehend its meaning.

Having come to the uncontrovertible conclusion that it was of no use to attempt to stand against Cissy, Mrs Johnson resigned herself to the necessity of receiving Mercedes into her house if Cissy so willed it. But although she habitually regarded Cecilia as a prodigy of talent and wisdom, and was willing to submit with more show, than reality of resistance

to all her plans, she did not neglect to revenge herself for the heavy yoke which was thus imposed upon her, by frequent ill-humour, taunting speeches, and unwearied perverseness in trifles ; at the same time in all seasons of difficulty casting herself helplessly on her, and looking to her to make those decisions, and those efforts to which she felt herself unequal. Such conduct as this could not inspire respect in one endowed with ardent feelings, and strong sense, in no common measure. It produced a species of contempt that led her to act with a decision, and self-confidence, which, had she felt more reverence for those around her, she would never have displayed. The many disadvantages of her situation had rendered her manner not prepossessing. Vulgar affectation she laughed at and despised ; insincerity and flattery she abhorred and exposed ; but while she indulged herself in a frank avowal of her own sentiments, and in just sarcasm with regard to such in others as her penetration detected only to blame, kindness always marked her demeanour towards those she loved, and deference, towards those she respected. She was not easily convinced, because unused to bow her understanding ; but if conviction of error reached her, she was the first to avow it with perfect candour. Constrained to rely on herself in preference to others, she became presumptuous, and was disposed to be severe ; but the generosity of her disposition rendered her capable of the most devoted affection for those whom she discovered to merit admiration and esteem.

CHAPTER III.

But, oh ! the heavy change !
As killing as the canker to the rose,
Or frost to flowers that their gay wardrobe wear,
When first the whitethorn blows.

MILTON.

I pity thee—even to anguish.

COLERIDGE.

WHEN Lady Sylvester and Cecilia reached — street, they heard in reply to their inquiries concerning Mercedes, that she had not risen, but was still asleep.

“ Oh ! do not let me awake her, pray ! ” exclaimed Cecilia, “ I will steal quietly into her room, so quietly as not to disturb her, and there I will remain until she wake up of herself, and if I am sent for, the servant can wait till I inquire for him. It is not late.”

And she followed the maid eagerly to the door of Mercedes’ chamber, and stole in, as she had said, so quietly as not to cause one restless movement on the part of the slumberer ; and placing herself beside the couch, turned her eyes eagerly on the face of one whom she had never yet seen, but whom she already regarded with so much interest. During the days of her prosperity she

had heard much of her rare and brilliant beauty, and had discovered that the remembrance and the dread of it, now assisted to steel her mother's heart against her admission into their family, for would it not, though shrouded in grief and poverty, still have power to eclipse her daughters' charms, and to ensnare the affections of her son? Such was one of Mrs. Johnson's fears; perhaps the one that told most against the interests of the poor orphan. Cecilia, therefore, as she now gazed on that faded form, asked herself if that wan cheek, hollow sunken eye, and colourless lip threatened a dangerous rivalry of all competing charms? Was this the merchant's beautiful daughter? If so, what must have been the sufferings that had so fearfully changed her! As this thought touched her heart, she felt an interest spring up beyond what the most glowing loveliness could have inspired; and she continued to gaze through her tears, till she clearly discerned what might have the beauty of features cast in so faultless a mould, though now sharpened and attenuated by disease and sorrow. While fancy restored to that cheek the bloom of health and youth, to that lip its coral dye, to that brow a sweet serenity, and pictured an eye beaming with light and intelligence, from beneath the fringe of the long dark lashes that swept her cheek, Cecilia saw a form arise before her gifted with rare loveliness; but still this image fell short of what reality had once been.

During the long hour for which Cecilia watched

for Mercedes' waking, she had time to frame a thousand visionary plans of kindness; and began to feel impatient that she should wake to participate in the sister's love which her heart had already bestowed. At length her wish was gratified; Mercedes unclosed her eyes; she seemed distressed by the ardent gaze which they encountered from Cecilia's dark orbs, which were fixed full upon her, and closing them again, made a feeble effort to turn away.

Cecilia bent over her impetuously, and exclaimed:

"Mercedes, don't turn away from me. I am your cousin. I am come to stay with you."

Mercedes only murmured in answer to this:

"Where am I? This seems all strange to me," and she looked around, and on Cecilia without recognition.

"Who are you?" she said.

"Your cousin, Cecilia Johnson." The thought flashed across Cecilia's mind of the antipathy which Mercedes Ratcliffe and her father had been supposed to entertain towards her family, and she added eagerly, and with a slight resentment: "You need not dislike me. You do not know me, you have never seen me before; and now I am come to wait on you, to nurse you, to take you home if you will—to be your sister if you will let me," and she burst into tears.

Poor Mercedes was too much bewildered to comprehend this vehement declaration, and the agi-

tation it caused her was more than she had strength to sustain. She could only press her hand to her head, as if supplicating for quiet; and Cecilia, coming suddenly to a sense of the folly of her impetuosity, how little it befitted the situation in which she had placed herself, and the injurious effects it might have, drew the curtains round the poor invalid, and by silent care sought to soothe her back into tranquillity. These judicious measures were gradually successful; Mercedes' troubled mind slowly returned to consciousness of all that had gone before; and she was able to hail the prompt arrival of her cousin, as the harbinger of future kindness.

Before the hour to part came, Cecilia and Mercedes felt that they understood each other, and Cecilia went away happy in the conviction that she had already inspired her cousin with a confidence in the truth of her affection, and rejoicing in the permission which she had persuaded her to give, that on her return home she might make any arrangements which she thought would be most conducive to her comfort and welfare.

The result of this was, that in a few days Mercedes, without the faintest show of unwillingness on the part of Lady Sylvester, and in total ignorance that any difficulties had been encountered, and overcome by her zealous friend, was removed to Mr. Johnson's house. There, under the tender care of Cecilia, she gradually regained her strength, and enjoyed a repose that was little disturbed by

the other part of the family, at present comprising only Mrs. Johnson and Rose. Cecilia declared perfect quiet to be essential to her recovery, and rarely suffered her to emerge from her own little sitting room, except to accompany her in an evening drive, so fearful was she that want of delicacy in her mother, or want of tact in Rose should wound her sensitive feelings.

CHAPTER IV.

My desolation does begin to make a better life.

You are as welcome as I

Have words to bid you ; and shall find it so

In all that I can do.

SHAKSPEARE.

“MERCEDES,” said Cecilia to her beloved charge, one morning as they were seated together in her favourite boudoir, “I have formed a plan for you, and I shall be very much grieved if you are not pleased with it.”

“Well, then, I will be pleased,” answered Mercedes, trying to summon a faint smile to her lips as she spoke.

“Oh !” continued Cecilia, abruptly, “I do not mean pleased with me, but with the plan. I am going to take you to our villa at Richmond. You know that Margaret and Frederick come home to-morrow ; they will fill the house with noise. You will be glad to be away from them—now don’t say that you will not be glad, because I must know them best. The fresh country air, too, will do you much more good than this hot square, and green meadows will be more refreshing to your eyes than these dusty trees. So papa will take us there on Saturday, and stay the next day with us, and

on Monday we shall be left quite alone. Now you will let me carry my plan into execution, will you not?"

Mercedes tried to speak, but she could not; there was something delightfully soothing in the idea of perfect retirement which Cecilia suggested, and in the prospect of being entirely alone with her. She began to say that Cecilia was too good, too kind, but tears checked her speech, and she could not proceed.

"Too kind!" repeated Cecilia. "No one ever before called me too kind. It is very pleasant to me to see that you fancy me good and amiable; but when you are stronger, and better able to take care of yourself, and know more of me, you will think me less so."

"I hope not," replied Mercedes, with earnest surprise, for she saw that her cousin, though she spoke abruptly, spoke with deep feeling also.

Cecilia was led to make this proposition to Mercedes from having remarked with sorrow, that although she had appeared to derive benefit from her first removal, the improvement had been merely temporary, and after a few weeks, her cheek was again as pale, and her eye as heavy as when first she saw her. Though the care with which she ensured her tranquillity in her present abode, seemed to soothe her, yet she did not see that she made that rapid progress in regaining strength and health, which her eager wishes demanded; and she anticipated with the

utmost ardour the beneficial effects of removing her into the fresh air of the country, and of the lovely peaceful scene which would be presented to her whither they were going.

Her hopes, however, were not to be immediately realised. The home to which she conducted Mercedes was indeed a lovely one; but no sooner was she established there, than she appeared to be seized with an unconquerable unwillingness to move, or even to speak. She was too languid to demonstrate any emotion, or the slightest preference of one thing over another. No colour returned to her cheek, no brilliancy to her eye, no elasticity to her step.

It was to her “no joy to live;” she would sit for hours, silent and unemployed; she was indeed too feeble to continue the slightest occupation long together. Yet, as she never made any complaint, nor expressed the smallest want, Cecilia was at a loss how to proceed with her. She saw with deep regret, that Mercedes entertained

No view of days to come that was not sad;
As sad as life with all its hopes resigned,
As sad as aught, but guilt, can make mankind.

The fact was, that this prostration of mental and bodily strength sprung in a great measure from the unnatural tension which had preceded it. It was caused by over exertion, and over fatigue, succeeded now by a proportionate lassitude. All that outward calmness which Mercedes had maintained with Lady Sylvester, from the time that she learnt

to know her, appeared entirely lost when she found herself with a sympathizing friend. Forced to press her grief inward, and to conceal it, it had been

Very still, and therefore seemed to sleep.

But the congenial warmth which she now experienced had the effect of sunbeams on the ice; the flood gates of her tears, which had been locked by 'hard unkindness, altered eye,' were raised, and they flowed more profusely than on the first days of her sorrow, for then their source had been dried up by horror. While with Lady Sylvester, she had been impelled to rouse herself to repel insult by dignity; she had been enforced into action by the absence of any person willing to spare her the exertion; but now she felt helpless as a child; her energy was enfeebled, and she sank from the moment that a friendly hand was held out to her support.

Cecilia finding it impossible to direct her thoughts to the future, for on that she looked with the blank eye of despondency, strove gradually to lead her back to the past, hoping that the unreserved expression of every feeling and of every pang might afford relief. Nor was she mistaken; by inducing Mercedes to talk of herself, and to give vent to long stifled emotions, she removed the pressure that crushed her heart, more effectually than by any other means which she could have devised. Mercedes gradually told her every thing, almost every trifle that had occurred during her absence from

England. Cecilia was fully convinced that it was not the contemplation of the clouded future, the loss of fortune, and the disgrace of downfall, that preyed upon her mind ; but her father's death, and the falsehood of her friend and her lover. All that she related concerning Lady Sylvester and her son, all the conversations which she repeated, and the trifling occurrences which she now remembered, revealed to the clear-sighted Cecilia a thousand things before unsuspected.

“ Good Heavens ! ” she inwardly exclaimed with lively indignation, “ how is it possible that her father should have committed her to such hands ? ” She longed to communicate her opinions unreservedly to Mercedes, and completely to unveil the unworthiness of her former mis-called friends, and to expose all their artifices to her view, that she might thank Heaven that she was not Wentworth's wife. Perhaps Mercedes had already done so, though she refrained from any outward expressions of resentment, or censure.

Cecilia also conceived a high esteem for Lord Sylvester. She was amazed that Mercedes had not preferred him to his brother, and she indulged in not a few delightful visions of his return from the continent, being followed by an avowal of a long cherished affection for her friend. On Julian, though Mercedes forgot not to speak of him, she scarcely bestowed a thought, nor would she have deemed his passion less presumptuous than he considered it himself. Mercedes' account of his

fervent injunctions to her, to avail herself of the protection of his family, awoke a feeling of jealousy, and a fear, that if Mercedes dispatched the letter with which he had entrusted her, she should be robbed of her friend, by those who were strangers to her. But here Mercedes, with that firmness which always marked her performance of whatever she conceived to be a duty; but with all that gentleness which, without weakening her decisions, cleared them from the imputation of harshness, turned a deaf ear to Cecilia's entreaties, and in compliance with her promise to Julian, transmitted his letter without delay to his mother.

It was with reluctance that Mercedes thus opposed Cecilia's wishes; and a knowledge of her motives increased her affection towards her. Feeling the burden of her own grief in a measure lightened, other thoughts now found a place in her mind.

"Tell me, Cecilia," she one day said to her as she lay reclining on a couch, while Cecilia sat at her feet, looking oftener up into her face than on the open page before her, "how is it that I only know you now; that I never happened to see you with the rest of your family?"

"Oh! because I was never with them. Would you like me to give a sketch of my life, up to this my twentieth year, and your twentieth year also, is it not, Mercedes?"

"Yes," replied Mercedes, with a sigh. "It is. Can I be not yet twenty? I feel so much older,

so much older than you. I should like a sketch of your life very much, dearest Cecilia; do let me have it."

"Well then, in my childhood I did not live at home with my sisters; I was given up to my grandmother; a gift she was glad to accept, with a stipulation that she was to be allowed to do just as she liked with me, and that ended by my being allowed to do just as I liked; and I liked to run very wild. They say my education was entirely neglected, but in one respect, it suited me well. I loved to live out of doors under the greenwood tree, and I throve on it; for from a sickly infant, I grew into a very robust, hearty girl, with a skin dyed brown by the sun, such as you see me now. I often think it a great pity that I was not the only son, the support of the family. I have such a bold and daring spirit, not at all womanly," she said, her dark eyes flashing with fire, and full of latent mischief; "and quite thrown away as it is, I am forced to conceal it."

"Nonsense, dear Cecilia," replied Mercedes; "your tenderness, at least, is feminine."

"No, I don't think that it is; I have seen men quite as tender—much more gentle than I ever am. Why, I am sure that I think my father more gentle and tender than my mother. But to go back to my history—I lived with my grand-mamma till I was nearly fifteen, never having a wish contradicted, nor ever disappointed of a promised pleasure. I was happy enough; certainly

much happier than spoilt children generally are, for I came in contact with nobody ; I annoyed no one, and no one rebuked me. I had a high spirit in a healthy body.

“ You may think what a change it was for me to be removed to that dull prison house in London, which was my fate when my dear grandmother died. I am not reconciled to it yet, and never shall be, I feel ; but it was worse then. My grief was uncontrollable, and so was my temper. I hated everything about me, and nearly everybody ; more especially a very fine lady, my sisters’ governess ; and she in revenge taught them to be very much shocked at everything I said and did. I was wretched myself, and, I believe, destroyed the comfort of every one in the house. It soon began to be said that I was intolerable, and some one (I don’t know who, but I think it must have been a sensible person) proposed that I should be sent to school. To school accordingly I went, and I only returned home the same spring that you went abroad ; I never would come home for my holidays, if they were to be spent in London ; and no one cared whether I did or not. So that is the reason that I never saw you ; that mystery is explained.”

“ And how did you like school ? ” asked Mercedes with an air of great interest.

“ Why, not so well as my grandmother’s home ; but I think that I did learn some wisdom there. I began to discover that I was not the only person in the world whom those around me had to consider,

and that there existed very different opinions and feelings from my own, which I should find myself forced to consult. Perhaps, you will think that this was a knowledge which, like other school acquirements, I have lost again?"

"No, indeed; I often see your actions prove how thoroughly you have learnt it."

Cecilia seemed to listen to these words incredulously; then, shaking her head, she replied:

"You don't intend to deceive me, so I suppose that I have deceived you. No one else would say those words for me. It may be true, that hitherto I have been much disposed to comply with you; but then I love you so much," she said, the colour mounting on her cheek, and the tears springing to her eyes; "and perhaps it won't last—I don't mean my love; I mean my compliance."

"I am glad to hear that," answered Mercedes smiling; "for now you spoil me."

"If you were to ask me if things go better at home now than formerly, I should scarcely know how to answer you," continued Cecilia after a moment's thought, "I am not such a disturber of peace as I was, certainly. I choose my own path, and do not trespass on that of others. Still altercation will arise. Sometimes it seems to me that all fear, and none love me, except indeed my father." (But here Cecilia checked herself; she would not dwell on her father's love to the poor orphan). "Why should this be? I am necessary at home, for I am

often consulted, often called on to act. I can't tell how they used to do without me, and sometimes I wish that they were forced to do so again. My sisters fall into such silly difficulties; my mother into such idle quarrels. I dare say you will think very lightly of my grievances, Mercedes; but they often make me very sick at heart," said Cecilia sorrowfully; "especially," she added in an under tone, "when they occasion self-reproach."

"Oh! dearest Cecilia," exclaimed Mercedes; "do not let them be the cause of such a feeling. Do not let these trifles, however harassing they may be, occasion so great an evil."

Mercedes was much touched at her cousin's words, and through the careless tone under which she ever strove to conceal her feelings, she plainly perceived that Cecilia was not happy, that she had not that satisfaction in her daily course of life, that alone can give peace; that in spite of her apparent disregard of the manner in which, according to her own account, she often treated those around her with contemptuous disrespect and angry impatience, a better spirit spoke within her, and

Remorse behind was telling o'er her fears,
And 'neath a smiling eye, the soul was full of tears.

Cecilia saw that she was touched with pity, and anxious to soothe and counsel her; she raised herself on her knees beside her, and as she kissed her forehead, let fall a tear on it.

“I am much more happy, dearest Mercedes,” she said in a hurried voice, “since I have known you, and trust to be much better. You I love, admire, and esteem so much; and every day that I pass with you I feel, when I lie down at night, that I have passed it better than I should otherwise have done, and I thank Heaven for it. Since we have been here, I have been so peaceful! Only when I dwell on this thought, I feel that I am most selfishly forgetting that while you impart so much happiness to me, I can do so little for you.”

“Oh! Cecilia, how can you speak thus? You can only do it to remind me how much I am indebted to you.”

“For what?” interrupted Cecilia, impatiently. “For the performance of a few of the commonest acts of humanity! You must have been prepared to despise me indeed if my conduct has had the effect of surprising you. Spare me any thanks, dear Mercedes, and if I am better than you expected, do not tell me so. It is too ambiguous a compliment to convey much pleasure.”

Mercedes gave a melancholy smile, and answered:

“‘If thou wilt expect, let it not be gladness.’ I have been taught this truth, and one more bitter far, which is not to expect kindness even where it might be claimed; and on you—on your family, I have no claims.”

These were the only words of the kind that

Cecilia had ever heard fall from the lips of Mercedes. She was distressed and touched, and replied eagerly :

“There are ties of blood between us, Mercedes. Would you call them nothing? I feel that my heart beats towards you as towards a sister.”

Mercedes raised herself from her couch, and hastily threw her arms round Cecilia’s neck.

“Oh, Cecilia !” she said, “I cannot be to you as a sister. I must be up, and go forth from hence, and struggle with my ill-fortunes, and seek a subsistence. I would not have you love me as a sister, for then your heart would bleed too much for the afflictions and difficulties that I look to encounter, and which, with God’s help, I hope to overcome. If you regard the conflict so tenderly, you will weep too much for me. Give me compassion, dear Cecilia ; let that suffice. If you give me love, I shall cause you pain.”

“So be it,” replied Cecilia, in an earnest voice. “Yet will I give you love. The deepest love that I can feel shall be yours, and you must not reject it, for then indeed do you pierce through the heart that offers it. No, Mercedes, you shall never say, while I live, that you have ‘no healing medicine in your sickness,’ though you may, if you so will it, repel the hand that would bear it to your lips.”

Mercedes, as her cousin spoke these words, and as she saw her dark eyes fill with a light of love and benevolence, that rendered her countenance at

that moment angelic, took her hand, (that kind hand of which she spoke,) and pressing it tenderly to her lips, answered :

“ No, Cecilia, I have no power to do that. I am weak ; I will yield to you.”

And she lay in Cecilia’s arms that fondly clasped her, and did not speak again ; her eyes were closed ; her strength was exhausted ; at last she moved her lips, and murmured in a low voice, but her words were quite audible to her companion’s ear :

“ Cecilia, I will never again say that I am poor in friends. I have you on earth, and God in Heaven.”

After this she fell asleep, and Cecilia ventured not to withdraw suddenly the support which she afforded her. As she continued kneeling there, with Mercedes’ head reclining on her shoulder, a thought, bright, consolatory, and generous, pointing out a means of relieving her from future cares and difficulties, of placing her in the secure enjoyment of all that was necessary to the peacefulness of her life, sprang up in Cecilia’s heart ; a heavenly suggestion, and one received and entertained with a glad welcome. But the joy with which she hailed it, was damped by the after recollection that it must be long before she could carry it into execution.

CHAPTER V.

Now you must put me in your heart for friend.
I must commune with your grief,
Or you deny me right.

SHAKSPEARE.

BY this conversation, the cousins were more than ever endeared to each other. Mercedes thought with much grief of the secret sources of uneasiness of which Cecilia had revealed to her the existence which were, in their onward course, undermining her domestic happiness, and causing rank weeds to spring up in a soil well adapted to the growth of the finest fruits. Gratitude and affection filled her with an earnest desire to administer some judicious counsel to her friend for the future guidance of her conduct, before she returned to the scene of trial; but Mercedes hesitated, for she was little accustomed to advise, and naturally indisposed to do so. Her example, however, probably effected more than precept could have done. Cecilia, who had not without shame, though unacknowledged, unveiled the odious truth of the existence of family dissension to her friend, when she reflected on, and warmly admired, the meekness with which Mercedes had endured the

outrages which she had received from Lady Sylvester, 'resolved and re-resolved,' in her far inferior trials, to emulate the same spirit. During the period of delightful repose which they enjoyed together, before, as autumn drew on, they should be forced to rejoin the rest of the family, she flattered herself with the idea that she gained some portion of that self-command which she so much revered, and began to feel almost eager to display her newly acquired strength to others, and to test it herself.

Alas! it did not stand the trial so well as she had anticipated, or as Mercedes had hoped. Many serious annoyances arose gradually, and Cecilia's patience gave way before them. She pleaded in self-justification to her upbraiding conscience, awakened to remorse by the mildly rebuking language of Mercedes' eye, that, had the wrongs which she resented with indignant vehemence, been inflicted only on herself, she could have endured, or, as she was more inclined to express it, despised them. But when she perceived that the asylum which the unhappy orphan so greatly needed was grudgingly yielded by her nearest relatives; that a thousand petty slights, and remarks, indelicately made, when not unkindly designed, were suffered daily to remind her of her altered fortunes; and when she began to fear that these would not be the only means employed to separate her friend from her, her indignation was no longer to be restrained. Her hasty expression of it, far from

doing any good, only rendered Mrs. Johnson more than ever averse to allow of Mercedes' presence: her father was also disposed to desire the removal of a cause of daily provocation, and her sisters were not inclined to submit to the aggravated ill humour which their mother displayed. Fortunately for Mercedes' peace, the son whom Mrs. Johnson was so desirous to guard from danger was, for some time after her admission into the family, absent from home. During the sporting season he went into a distant county; but his first remarks on his return were fatally alarming. His mother heard him observe to Cecilia that Mercedes was now almost as handsome as ever. This speech was sufficient to awaken all her maternal solicitude, and the next day she sought Mercedes in her chamber, to guard by prompt measures against impending danger. When there, having provided against the chance of interruption by sending Cecilia to execute some commissions for her, that could not hastily be accomplished, she commenced a discourse which, with some circumlocution, conveyed her real meaning very clearly to her listener.

Mrs. Johnson was first at the pains to ascertain that Mercedes was as well convinced of the irretrievable loss of her fortune as she was herself; and she then proceeded to make it seen and felt by the destitute orphan, that it would be more fitting for her to make such exertions in her own behalf as should ensure the means of existence, than to be supported in idleness by those on

whose charity she had not sufficient claim to demand such a provision.

She was quite willing, she declared, and had done enough to show that she was so, to allow Mercedes to remain under her roof as long as she had no other shelter ; but she could not conceive how, with the grand education that she had received, and the sums of money that had been lavished on it, (far greater than any that her daughters had ever cost her, though perhaps their pretensions to have it expended on them had been equal), she should now be destitute of resources in herself qualifying her to enter on a situation which might afford her a comfortable home, and in which the remuneration of her services might form a fund for future years.

All that Mrs. Johnson said, in which there was no want of wisdom, though some of kindness and generosity, had already passed through Mercedes' own mind, and she listened to it now without impatience or resentment. She strove not to weep, because she did not wish it to be inferred that her tears sprang from wounded pride or disappointment. She never had rested any hopes on the possibility that Mrs. Johnson would long pursue an opposite line of conduct ; she was, therefore, able to maintain a sufficient composure to thank her for her advice, and adding with quiet dignity that she had already contemplated the mode of proceeding which she recommended, and would now consider it further without delay, had the satisfaction of

seeing her counsellor retire, without having betrayed to her those tender and refined feelings, which it would have pained her deeply to expose to an unsympathising eye.

Left to the solitude of her own chamber, Mercedes sought to calm her mind, which had been considerably disturbed by Mrs. Johnson's sudden address ; for though she had declared with truth that she had already planned the execution of all that was now suggested to her, she had not contemplated the necessity of immediate execution of a design which she had hitherto striven in vain to reduce to any thing that appeared practicable. The debility of mind and body of which she was still painfully sensible, had made her timidly hope for a continuance of repose, until her strength should be more re-established. Now perceiving the only means by which she could enjoy it about to be withdrawn, she cast a momentary glance around her, as if to realise her utter friendliness, (she had never received any communication from Mrs. Wilmot in reply to Julian's letter), and then strove to vanquish the dismay which the sense of it inspired, and to arm herself to 'serve and suffer patiently.'

It may seem strange that this poor orphan should be so alone in the world ; but a few words will explain the cause. Her father had sought but little society for her. His unremitting attendance on his peculiar avocation left him scarcely time to seek any for himself ; and in the few hours which he

spent at home, the company of his playful child was a sufficient relaxation to his fatigued spirits. Motives of vanity and ambitious designs led him to object strongly to allow any great intimacy to spring up between Mercedes and any of her own relatives, for he began to look on to a time when she should be elevated far above them. Thus her life in childhood and early youth was almost solitary; but she was of a gay disposition, easily amused, and had an aptness to learn, and a love of application, which rendered the often irksome and dull routine of education replete to her with interest and pleasure. Masters of all kinds were at her command, and owing to the talents with which nature had gifted her, she profited more by their instructions than nine out of ten of their pupils usually do. But with the volatility of uncurbed youth, she had turned from one favourite occupation to another, acquiring little proficiency in any; often displaying talent, but never attaining excellence. And now, when she came to examine herself closely on those things with which she thought herself best acquainted, she was dismayed to find how superficial was her knowledge, how unmethodical had been her studies, and how imperfect were her acquirements. She covered her face with her hands, and wept most bitterly. The further she continued her reflections, the more convinced she became of her incapacity to carry into execution the plan which she had eagerly formed of immediately seeking the situation of a governess, and

thus supporting herself in independence by means of those accomplishments which she owed to her father's liberality—an idea which had been inexpressibly sweetened by that thought. When she represented to herself the active services expected from a subordinate governess in a private family, still more from a teacher in a school, she was painfully convinced that her present feeble health entirely incapacitated her for undertaking them, and placed as effectual a bar between herself and such inferior situations, as the ignorance which she so deeply deplored did with respect to higher ones.

The result of all these painful cogitations was that poor Mercedes descended to the dinner-table that day with eyes so red and swollen with weeping, and cheeks so pale, that Frederick's remark, as soon as he was alone with his sisters, was that it was a thousand pities that so pretty a girl should have so deplorably fallen off, and that she was really very silly to cry away all her beauty just as she had lost all her fortune; for her face, such as it used to be, might easily have won her another. Cecilia, who had been on the point of following Mercedes to learn the cause of her increased dejection, stopped to declare that she was a thousand times more lovely and interesting in her sorrow and tears, than she ever could have been in her brightest days, and that none but the coldest hearts could resist the charm with which she was now invested. This assertion gave great displeasure to her sisters, particularly as their own re-

marks had in some measure corroborated the truth of it. Rose remembered that her songs a few evenings before had been listened to with cold indifference by one who had often lavished the warmest praise on them, and had secretly detected the cause of his insensibility in the gaze of pity which she had seen him cast on her drooping cousin. Some similar remembrance rankled in Margaret's bosom, and Mrs. Johnson, inwardly ashamed of her late proceedings, and incensed with Mercedes for having told the tale of her cruelty so plainly, resented as a personal affront any thing said in her praise. It was not until a sharp altercation had taken place that Cecilia had the wisdom to withdraw, and she sought her cousin with a ruffled temper, and much discomposure of mind.

CHAPTER VI.

Di memoria e di speme il cor pascendo.

PETRARCA.

There is that within us, heavenly sown,
That gladdeneth in afflictions, and doth find
Sweetness in sorrow.

THOUGHTS IN PAST YEARS.

No sooner had Mercedes returned to her chamber, than in eager pursuance of a thought that had awakened hope, she sought a large portfolio which her trembling hand could scarcely raise, and opening it, began to spread out its contents before her. They consisted of all the sketches which she had made in Rome, almost all begun and completed under the directions (oh ! how readily accorded) of Julian. When they again met her eye they excited a feeling of approval beyond what she had expected them to call forth, and the remembrance of the many encomiums, which had been lavished on them, though she had ever been far from yielding implicit credence to them, afforded some additional support to her own conviction, that they were not wholly without value. An idea had occurred to her that her proficiency in this art (the greatest of which she could boast) might become the means of acquiring that independence to which

she aspired. These thoughts naturally recalled Julian to her mind, and she said to herself as she turned over the leaves :

“ Ah ! were my kind adviser here, who could be more able to assist me with counsel, who more ready to exert himself in my behalf ? ”

As she pursued this train of meditation, she became aware that if Wentworth had been connected with every thing gay and hopeful in her life, yet it was Julian's image that recurred to her as associated with all hours of mental pleasure, and all the higher enjoyments of taste and feeling which she had known.

As she continued to collect her scattered drawings, and recalled as she gazed on them a thousand petty circumstances that had marked the delightful hours thus employed, the exquisite pleasure with which they had been done, and the future enjoyment which she had anticipated when she should show them to her father,—all these remembrances called forth bursts of tears from Mercedes' eyes ; and relinquishing her sad occupation, she placed her arm on the table, and laying her head down on it, wept without control. While thus employed, she heard a quick step approach her door, and a hasty knock for admission. Knowing well who it was, she immediately unclosed it, and Cecilia entered. One quick glance at Mercedes' face, and another at the table at which she had been occupied, seemed to tell her all that had been passing in her friend's mind. Hastily closing the

door behind her, she clasped her in her arms, and passionately bursting into tears, exclaimed :

“ So they are bent on driving you away from me, and you—you are content to go !”

“ Dearest Cecilia,” replied Mercedes, kissing her tenderly, and drawing her towards a seat, “ you must not speak thus. You know that it is necessary for us to part—that I never could, or did think of remaining here long. Oh ! how thankful I am for the shelter afforded me for many months past ! If, as yet I have done nothing to secure my independence, to earn my subsistence, I may plead in excuse how much I have suffered in health. But now I am better, much better, dearest, owing to your kindness and care. My inaction must cease now. I am quite aware that the time is come when it ought to cease ; when desire of ease must be succeeded by active exertion. But what direction shall that take ? Here would I gladly ask for counsel ; but to you I must not, cannot apply for it, if you listen to me with feelings of resentful anger, which it is most blameable to indulge, and which I deem wholly uncalled for. If you wish to be to me that friend that you might be, that counsellor whose assistance I need, discard, dearest Cecilia, such sentiments from your mind. Spare me, I implore you, the pain of discovering that having received most weighty obligations from your mother, and all your family, the sole return that I shall have made them is to have given birth to undutiful feelings in the heart of one of its members ;

—to have sown seeds of contention in its bosom.”

The tearful earnestness with which Mercedes spoke, the seriousness of her manner silenced her impetuous friend, if it did not change her mood. She allowed her hand to remain for awhile in that of Mercedes; then suddenly withdrawing it, she said:

“I believe this is no fitting home for you, and you are right to go.”

“Oh, Cecilia!” replied Mercedes, reproachfully, “do you imagine that I shall leave you without pain?”

“But you say that you must go, and I cannot contradict you.”

Cecilia felt that she could not combat what Mercedes proceeded to advance, and she resolved to impose a restraint upon herself, and carefully to conceal from her friend the lurking feelings of resentment that lay in her bosom, and to appear to view without impatience any efforts she should make to carry her purpose into effect. Nor could she perceive any feasible mode of preventing the execution of it. If she were to make an appeal to her father, she believed that she possessed influence enough with him to obtain what she should ask. He loved Cecilia more than any of his children; her liveliness and quickness of comprehension rendered her able both to amuse and to assist him. Engrossed in affairs of importance, he would not deem any request that she should make him about

Mercedes worthy of serious consideration ; but of what avail was it to obtain his authority to offer her cousin a home, if that home were not to be an abode of peace ? Cecilia, therefore, resolved to delay her appeal to him until the time arrived for putting into execution a plan she fondly cherished—an object which she had in view—one which would restore Mercedes, if not to former affluence, at least to comfort and independence. It was this : Cecilia's grandmother had on her death left her a sum of money entirely at her own command, to come into her possession as soon as she was of age ; and Cecilia had been informed by her father that it would by that time amount to £5,000. He had also told her that this gift would not prevent him from providing for her exactly the same as he did for his other daughters ; and the generous Cecilia, from the time that she had learnt to pity and to love Mercedes, and had become acquainted with the extent of her misfortunes, resolved that on her twenty-first birthday she would make it the happiest day of her life, by presenting to her beloved cousin the little fortune which would then become her own, and be herself content with the portion which she should receive from her father.

It must be confessed that the ecstasy of joy with which she contemplated the fulfilment of this favourite design was considerably damped by misgivings and fears of the obstacles she might meet with in its accomplishment. She began to see that the independence which she looked forward to

acquiring would by no means be so complete as to enable her to act without obtaining the full consent of her father at least, to her intentions. She did not anticipate any very serious opposition from him, unless he were influenced by others, for she knew him to be generous and liberal; and her scheme appeared to her so rational, that she could not imagine that any, but the most mercenary of beings, would regard it with disapprobation.

The greatest difficulty that she expected to encounter, was with regard to Mercedes herself; and the fear that she would combat the design, and might perhaps defeat it, convincing her of the necessity of keeping her still in ignorance of it, reconciled her to the pain of beholding her dispirited by cares for the future, and of witnessing her preparations for departure. It occurred to her, that it would have been most fortunate if she had possessed another friend who could have received her for the few months which must elapse before the eventful day, the coming of which she so longed to hasten; and she began to regret that silence on the part of Mrs. Wilmot which, at first, had given her satisfaction. She therefore proposed to Mercedes to make further inquiries in that quarter. She pointed out to her how impossible it was that Mrs. Wilmot should disregard a letter written by her son, even supposing that her feelings had cooled since the time when she thought it not too great a sacrifice to friendship and gratitude to quit the bosom of her family, and her native land, to attend

her dying mother. There must be some explanation of this mysterious silence, and this she urged Mercedes to seek. By the assistance of Maxwell, they learnt at length that poor Mr. Wilmot had died the very spring that Mercedes returned to England; the living was in the hands of a successor, who could afford no information with respect to the widow, except that he believed that she had left England shortly after the death of her husband. This led them to suppose that she had joined her son. Thus all their hopes were defeated on this point, and Cecilia was forced to assist Mercedes in earnest, in seeking to execute such plans as appeared most practicable. After much consideration, they had both of them come to the conclusion that it was on her skill in drawing that she should first rest her hopes of profit; and she one day proposed to Cecilia to take some copies, which she had employed herself in making from the sketches which she had done abroad, and of which the universal interest of the subjects would, she thought, give a claim to popular notice, to a print-shop in which, during the days of her affluence, she had been well known. She had since her return frequently visited it in search of the materials she needed in her art; and had received from the master of it many little marks of consideration and good nature, which showed her that he had not forgotten the very different circumstances in which he had formerly seen her. She therefore sought him with less painful embarrassment than it would have cost her to appeal to a stranger. Knowing

that his opinion was to be esteemed, she asked him to tell her candidly what value he should set on her productions, and how she could best make them available.

The man heard her inquiries with respectful readiness, and inspected with care the specimens of her portfolio which she had brought him. One of them he seemed to regard with increased interest and curiosity mingled with surprise. He paused over it so long, that Cecilia could not refrain from asking him hastily, why he remarked it more than the rest. He looked up as she spoke, and replied with some deliberation :

“I should not like to excite Miss Ratcliffe’s hopes in any way that might lead to disappointment; but I can show you a drawing here for which I received twenty pounds this morning, almost a fac-simile of this, in style and conception; and, I should really say, there is not a very wide difference in execution. For,” he said, turning to Mercedes, “Miss Ratcliffe must be aware that there is much inequality in these sketches, and without hesitation, I may pronounce this the best.”

“Oh! Mercedes,” exclaimed Cecilia, who had taken up the drawing, “I am sure that in this instance you have put in the original sketch, instead of your copy; for I remember this date was only on the first.”

Mercedes, as she looked, assented; and re-

membered well that the drawing had been executed under the superintendence of Julian, and even owed some touches to his hand.

“But these things, I need not tell you,” continued the printseller; “do not depend solely on merit. An established reputation of course ensures a sale for many trifles, which, without a name, would pass unnoticed. But I will show you the drawing to which I allude.”

Mercedes, pale, and trembling with a vague anticipation that sprang up in her mind, advanced with trepidation to see whose could be the drawing which so closely resembled her own. One glance sufficed to inform her, and she sank again into her seat; while Cecilia, in her eager curiosity to solve this mystery, did not observe her distress, but bending over the drawing, and reading the initials, J. W. on a corner of it, inquired hastily the painter's name.

“Wilmot, Madam,” was the reply. “He will have some pictures in the exhibition this year, and has excited great expectations of their excellence, from the admiration that was bestowed on one which he sent last spring from Italy. This is the more remarkable, as he is only one and twenty.”

“Is he in London? Where does he live?” continued Cecilia with increasing eagerness.

“I can give you his address, if you please, Madam,” said the man, and he went to seek it.

Cecilia now turned to Mercedes.

“Calm yourself, dearest,” she whispered; “this

is surely your friend; and he could not have been found more opportunely."

The man returned with Wilmot's card, saying :

"Mr. Wilmot may not be in town; I have not heard of his arrival, but here you can learn of him."

Cecilia hastily thanked him, and then thinking that her conduct might perhaps appear strange enough to call for some explanation, moved to a little distance from Mercedes, and in a low voice said :

"This painter, Mr. Shepherd, was sent out to Italy to pursue his studies by Miss Ratcliffe's father. Most painful remembrances are therefore awakened in her by this unexpected recognition of him here. As for the similarity of the drawings, that is easily accounted for, by the fact that he was her latest instructor."

Having said this, Cecilia returned to her friend, and proposed to depart. Mercedes rose and followed her in silence; the moment that Cecilia was seated in the carriage, she gave the servant Julian's direction. Then, as the door closed, she turned to Mercedes, and said :

"I have done right, have I not? You would like to see him without delay?"

"Yes, indeed," replied Mercedes, speaking with much emotion. "I have *no* doubt that I shall find in him a faithful friend. Oh! Cecilia," she added, after a short pause, taking her hand, and grasping it earnestly as she spoke, while her tears

gushed forth abundantly. "You cannot imagine the joy it will be to me, again to see one who thinks of my father with nothing but love and gratitude!"

Poor Mercedes!

She had had wounds, and some that could not heal.

The consciousness of the blot on her father's memory was one of these.

CHAPTER VII.

Sighs unquiet, and the sickly pang
Of a half dead, yet still undying hope.

COLERIDGE.

Quanti principi grandi, amati e cari,
Insieme con la vita han perso il nome !
Quanti poi vivon gloriosi e chiari,
Poveri nati, sol perchè le chiome
Di sacri lauri, alteri doni e rari,
S'ornarono felici ; ed ora, come
Chiare stelle nel ciel splendor beati ;
Mentre il mondo starà, sempre onorati !

VITTORIA COLONNA.

IN the painter's studio were seated Julian and his mother ; he was at his easel, and she was a little removed from him, at a small work-table at which she was not less busily employed. In person, Mrs. Wilmot greatly resembled her son. She possessed the same clear grey eye, that spoke as plainly, in its liquid light, of lively sensibility as of intellectual power ; the same expression of countenance, at once gentle yet dignified—at once mournful yet serene. She was deeply engaged in thought, of which Julian appeared to be the subject, for the widow often raised her face from her employment, and gazed on him with an air of

compassionate sorrow. Her son too not unfrequently directed his looks towards her, and if their eyes met, there would be such a sudden gush of tenderness in their glance, such a light of love, as dispelled the gloom that overcast their brows.

Julian however did not often look up from his painting, and sometimes when he did, and met his mother's gaze, withdrew his eyes as if averse to encounter it. The whole air of the young painter was very sad; the paleness that overspread his countenance was rendered more striking by the mourning which he wore for his father, and the very mode in which he handled the implements of his beloved art, confessed the deep dejection of his mind. At length the silence was broken by Mrs. Wilmot, who said with a smile, that was mournful in spite of herself:

"Well, Julian, I think that we must scarcely permit ourselves to regret that Mercedes does not need our aid."

Julian started; then after a moment's pause, he replied briefly:

"To do so were indeed unreasonable, for the home of a wealthy banker will afford her all those comforts and luxuries with which we are unprovided, and to which she is accustomed."

"But why do you always speak as if you deemed luxury so indispensable to her? Is this merely because she was brought up in its lap, or from your knowledge of her character?"

"Chiefly for the first reason," replied Julian,

hastily ; “ besides,” he added, “ she is so well suited to adorn the highest station.”

“ And yet, Julian,” said his mother drawing near, and placing her hand tenderly on his arm as she spoke ; “ I had begun to indulge a hope, that when the inequality of your fortunes was removed, the greatest obstacle of your wishes would be removed also : that when she lost that equivocal and delusive position which her father had obtained for her, she might, not altogether unwillingly—without repining, descend to a lower sphere, and there find a permanent and unpretending happiness, more real, and more congenial to her own heart, than were the gaudy pleasures she is called on to resign.”

Julian offered no reply to his mother’s words, to which he did not listen without agitation ; she therefore continued :

“ Believe me, that were this the case, whatever the strength of early habits, were they even more confirmed than her age can allow hers to be, the home that your love might prepare could more than compensate for the one she has lost. Do not suppose, dear Julian, but that your letters, however unintentionally, betrayed to me long before your lips revealed it, the sentiment which Miss Ratcliffe inspired ; nor was I ignorant that it proved a fresh incitement to your aspirations after fame. I perceived that the ardour which it excited might smooth the road to success, and render every difficulty superable ; but I saw not that the attainment of the greatest height in the

path on which you had entered would bring you nearer the object of your love. But now—”

“Mother,” interrupted Julian, “I see that you have never read me aright. Such was as little my expectation as yours. The hopes which you attribute to me were never entertained; and therefore cannot be replaced by such as you would implant. Mercedes more than ever needs the paltry gifts of fortune, and it is as little as ever in my power to bestow them upon her. Therefore the change in her situation has but cast an additional obstacle in the way. From the day that I first saw her, my earliest resolution was, (and is not now to be relinquished,) that never until my love can confer distinction shall it be avowed. All my desire was, and is, for the arrival of that time when she shall triumph in knowing herself to have been its sole object; all my ambition, that if my name descends, as it may descend, (unless death renders my course too brief,) to posterity on the rolls of fame, hers may be embalmed with my memory: that I may give her a place among those women rendered illustrious—not by the virtues or the beauties that made them beloved—for the first might have passed unrecognized by a world not worthy of them, and the latter might have perished like the flowers of the field; but by the devotion of those who loved them. Such is the wish of my heart, and it is attainable!

“Meantime, I have not desired, certainly I have not sought, to win her heart away from those whose

love had present wealth and rank to bestow. I have not striven to teach her to despise vulgar greatness, and to see in me one whom

Nature at my happy birth
Blest in her bounty with the richest dower
That Heaven indulges to a child of earth.*

I displayed not to her eyes the more lasting boon, which I feel will one day be mine to confer. I told her not of a glory that should one day shine forth and check 'the frown of supercilious brows,' and give dignity to the choice which would now be deemed ignoble. And yet I might have told her of these things. Auguries of success are discernible to other eyes than mine. The palm of genius has been awarded me, and future fame has been promised by lips that, in promising, almost bestow it. You will deem that I grow vain-glorious, mother," said Julian with a smile that seemed half in derision of his own enthusiasm. "Think not so. I have, it is true, (and why conceal from you one emotion of this throbbing heart?) at times a deep conviction that success is at my command,—that I have that within me before which difficulties shall disappear. This, mother, is the thought that I treasure up in my own heart; a secret that the future shall reveal; for the present, it is a hope that makes all labour light, and every dawning of success inestimably precious."

His mother was much affected by his earnestness.

* Southey.

“And in order to carry out this visionary scheme, will you refuse to possess yourself of the treasure that is the object of it, by any other means? Will you seek to grasp the shadow when the substance is within your reach?”

“How within my reach?” asked Julian impetuously. “Shall I go and seek her in the home of her wealthy relatives where she is still in the enjoyment of every advantage that she formerly possessed? They, perhaps, might be not unwilling to yield her to me; but never shall I be found willing to declare a love, that it would cost her a sacrifice to reward. Besides, do you not suppose that of the numbers that followed her, when her star shone brightly, there are some who will find her now, though its light be partly obscured by clouds? Do you not believe, that though Wentworth were false, as I ever knew him to be, some will prove true?”

As they were thus conversing, they were interrupted by the entrance of the maid, who thrust a card into Julian’s hand, saying as she did so:

“The ladies that wrote it wait down below to hear if there is any answer.”

Julian, taking the scrap of paper, carelessly saw his own direction on it, and muttering, “some troublesome visitor, I suppose,” turned to the other side. The words that met his eye were: “Miss Ratcliffe wishes to see Mr. Wilmot, if he should be disengaged.” Starting up, he put the card into his mother’s hand, and disappeared.

CHAPTER VIII.

My thoughts are deeply stirred, for they oft fain
Would wait on thee ; by thee unnoted, yet
Like unseen angels that would do thee good ;
Have tended on thee, though to all untold,
Nor deemed of, and by thee the least of all.

THOUGHTS IN PAST YEARS.

Gli occhi dolenti per pietà del core
Hanno di lagrimar sofferta pena.
Ora s' io voglio sfogar il dolore,
Che a poco a poco alla morte mena,
Convienmi di parlar traendo guai.

DANTE.

JULIAN speedily returned to his mother, and leading Mercedes, who accompanied him, towards her, placed the hand he held in Mrs. Wilmot's. The unfortunate girl sank upon a seat beside her, and for some time the silence was unbroken save by her sobs. After the lapse of a few minutes, Julian, unable to restrain his emotion, exclaimed vehemently :

“For God's sake speak to her, console her—tell her you will be her mother !”

Mrs. Wilmot obeyed this injunction by drawing nearer to the poor orphan, and folding her tenderly in her arms ; she drew back the heavy veil that concealed her from her sight, and impressed a kiss on her forehead, saying :

"Why have we not heard of you sooner, my poor child?"

Mercedes hesitated to reply; and then said, not upbraidingly, but timidly, glancing at the widow's garb:

"I thought your own grief had banished me from your mind."

"Why did you think that anything would make us forgetful of you?"

"I thought so," replied Mercedes, "because no answer came to the letter I sent."

"No letter has ever reached us; we have anxiously desired to obtain tidings of you; and since our arrival in London have succeeded in doing so. Another day would not have passed without our seeking you, dear Mercedes, in your present home."

Mercedes, re-assured by the tenderness of Mrs. Wilmot's manner, now spoke without reserve, and hurriedly gave expression to the thoughts that were uppermost in her mind.

"I have very lately," she said, "learned that you also had been afflicted. I thought that your silence was accounted for; but when I heard that Mr. Wilmot was here, and remembered the last words from him, the promise which he asked and obtained, I could not be content not to seek him and to inquire of you. I fancied that I should see you here, but I did not come without reluctance. I have found you," she continued, turning to Julian, "at a time when most in need

of your advice, perhaps assistance, and I do not feel afraid to ask it. You talk of my present home. I wish to quit it—speedily. I cannot have a home; I must go forth and labour. I seek the means of subsistence. You, Mr. Wilmot, may remember my drawings, and how you used to commend, and to hear them commended. I think—I hope, that your praises at least were sincere. Now do you think that I can in any way avail myself of them; of those I mean that I did when you were with me? Can I do others? Can I instruct children, or in any way turn this accomplishment, in which alone I can venture to believe that I in any measure surpass mediocrity, to account? I have thought of other means of profit, and in vain. I am as yet too weak, too incompetent to undertake any greater change. The time may come—I will strive to bring it near—when I may be qualified to do more.”

She spoke these words rapidly, for her agitation was great, though she struggled for composure; and she paused for breath.

Julian and his mother were at first too much affected to reply; at length the latter took her hand, and said gently:

“Do not, dear child, speak thus anxiously. You cannot be so destitute of friends as to allow of an imperative call for exertions to which you are as yet unequal. Quiet and repose are, I see, plainly needful to you.”

“You mistake my situation, indeed,” replied

Mercedes earnestly ; “ I am destitute of friends. I have one most zealous friend, it is true, but she has no power to help me further than she has done. The repose you speak of I cannot taste while I remain inactive. Exertion will bring after it fatigue, and rest may be sweet, but quiet and repose are denied me.”

Mrs. Wilmot made no reply to these words, she knew not how to combat them. After a brief silence she said :

“ You must at least be patient, and do nothing without consideration.”

“ I have been patient,” interrupted Mercedes, “ and I have already given much time to consideration.”

“ Well,” continued Mrs. Wilmot, “ Julian and I will come to see you, and we will consult together. You shall tell us all you have done, and we will consider what to do next. You shall make your friend known to me, that I may thank her for her care of one whom I regarded from her birth as my younger child. You must promise me, Mercedes, to remember how I am bound to you by the last words that passed your mother’s lips. Say not that you have no home, for you must come to me, and be my daughter.”

At these words Julian started, but with an effort maintained his self-command, while Mercedes could find no voice to speak of gratitude. She sat with her trembling hand in that of Mrs. Wilmot,

and the tears followed each other slowly down her pale cheek. At last she said :

“ My friend is here ; she waits for me. She is my cousin.”

“ Would you like her to come to you ?” said Mrs. Wilmot. “ Why should our acquaintance with her be delayed ? You must not forget, Mercedes, that though *she* may be your most familiar, I am the oldest friend you have in the world. Now go, Julian, and bring Miss Johnson here.”

Julian complied ; and when Cecilia came, Mercedes became more calm, and gradually recovered her composure. The sweet voice and countenance of Mrs. Wilmot, and the grateful cordiality with which she met her prepossessed Cecilia greatly in her favour. In a few minutes she began to feel that, if Mercedes must leave her, the pain of parting would be greatly alleviated by the idea of her going to Mrs. Wilmot, a prospect which she plainly saw she had a right to contemplate. She felt that had they been alone, she could even now have opened her whole heart to her, and was convinced that all her designs would have won her unhesitating approbation. She related all that had occurred at the print-shop, which had led to their discovery of Mr. Wilmot. The explanation of Mrs. Wilmot's conduct was this. Constrained to quit her former dwelling on the death of her husband, she had immediately formed the design which she had carried into execution of joining her son on the continent, believing it to be of importance that

his studies should not yet terminate. Living, as she did, in strict seclusion, and no regular correspondence existing between Mr. Ratcliffe and her husband, the tidings of the fate of the former never reached her ears, until she sought him on her arrival in London. Shocked and grieved beyond expression at the horrible details which she then received, she eagerly sought for further information with regard to his orphan child. All that she could learn was, that she was returning to England with Lady Sylvester.

Having in Julian's latest letters received an account of the projected union between her and Wentworth, she felt no dread that Mercedes would find herself friendless or destitute. With a heart aching with her own sorrows, and though full of pity for the afflicted daughter, but little fearful that any aggravation of distress awaited her, she left England to meet her son. When with Julian, he communicated to her all that he had learned from Lord Sylvester of the conduct of those to whom Mercedes had been entrusted by her father. This knowledge awoke not only indignation at what was passed, but serious misgivings with regard to the comfort of her journey homewards, and caused them to make, with the greatest anxiety, immediately on their own arrival, those inquiries to which the reply had appeared so satisfactory. Not but that it excited a species of regret in the hearts of both; for they had contemplated with a secret feeling of delight the prospect that Mercedes would henceforth belong to them—that, unprotected and uncared

for, she would take shelter with them; and Mrs. Wilmot, now from daily observation made well aware how utterly her son's peace was destroyed by his hitherto hopeless passion, had ventured to indulge in pleasing visions that represented her own child and the child of their regretted benefactor, restored to happiness, and mutually depending on each other for its continuance.

The situation in which they found Mercedes seemed to destroy the fabric she had raised. But the language which she heard from Mercedes' lips, and which far from being contradicted by her cousin, was in fact corroborated by silence, and sometimes by reluctant consent, entirely changed the aspect which things had worn before she had seen her unexpected visitors. Former hopes and schemes sprang again to life, and no sooner were the cousins departed, than her wish was to try to awaken similar ones in Julian. It caused her some astonishment to see her son, after Mercedes' departure, instead of placing himself beside her to discuss with her what could best and most readily be done for the orphan who had appealed to them—what could be effected in aid of her efforts, or to obviate the necessity for them—return to his easel, and continue to paint with apparently unabated industry. She watched him without attempting to draw him into conversation, until he should manifest such a desire himself, but she could not resume her former tranquillity. At length she rose quietly, and came and stood beside him watching his progress.

Julian was enthusiastically interested in the picture on which he was now employed. It was the second of two paintings which he designed to exhibit the following spring, in illustration of one of Collins's beautiful odes, (that to Mercy), which had peculiarly struck his fancy, and summoned up before it visionary forms which he was now striving to delineate. Mrs. Wilmot thought that the manner in which the very name of the poem recalled Mercedes to his mind, had possibly enhanced the charm which it possessed for him. She certainly was not mistaken in believing that in the angelic female figure, which was the most remarkable part of the composition, at least in this stage of it ;

Gentlest of sky-born forms, and most adored,
she could easily trace his vivid remembrance of
the charms of her he loved. Julian was indeed
convinced that

Mercy had, could Mercy's self be seen,
No sweeter look,*

and it was by recalling Mercedes' beauty to his
fancy's eye that he had striven to give life to the
idea which he wished to express ; to represent the
conception he had formed of

Her who sits a smiling bride
By valor's armed and awful side.

* * * * *

Who oft with songs divine to hear,
Wins from his fatal grasp the spear,
And hides in wreaths of flowers his bloodless sword.

* Waller.

At present he was occupied in representing her in that act which the poet thus describes :

Thy form, from out thy sweet abode
O'ertook him on his blasted road,
And stopped his wheels, and looked his rage away.
I see recoil his sable steeds
That bore him swift to savage deeds ;
Thy tender melting eyes they own.

His mother, as she bent over him, and gazed in wonder on the progress which he had made, said in a low voice of delight,

“How beautiful !”

Julian looked up, his eyes beaming with pleasure, and exclaimed in reply to what he believed to be her meaning :

“Is she not ? Did you ever see so heavenly a countenance ? Did you ever hear so sweet, so plaintive a voice ? What mild resignation united to what tender sensibility !”

“Ah, Julian,” interrupted his mother, with a gentle smile, “I was looking at your picture, but I will gladly talk of Mercedes instead.”

Julian coloured, and his mother relieved his embarrassment by adding :

“I have been wishing to do so ever since she left the room. Have you no plan to suggest by which we could relieve her from all present care at least ?”

“Yes,” replied Julian, “I have. I was just about to tell you of an arrangement which I have turned in my thoughts until it appears practicable. You know that yesterday you lamented that we had taken this house for so long a period, as it is scarcely large or commodious enough to suit my

purpose. I shall leave it, and find a studio and a lodging somewhere else in the neighbourhood. For you and Miss Ratcliffe the accommodation will be sufficient. I shall dine with you and pass my evenings here always; so, mother, you need not look sad at the idea of separation, for the loss will be merely imaginary. During the hours which I devote to labour, I am not a very entertaining companion, you must allow; and it would be very inconvenient to me to receive the many visitors whom I hope soon to have, here, even if Miss Ratcliffe did not reside with you, and quite impossible if she does. So to-morrow you can propose to her to come hither; and you must make her aware, mother, that you will be alone. She will then perhaps accede more willingly to your request."

"Nay," interrupted his mother, somewhat disappointed and displeased at this arrangement, "if she do not object to your banishment, I shall be less disposed to love her than I am now."

"Mother," replied Julian, seriously, "you would spare me all such words as these if you knew how much they pain me. Do not frustrate your design to do good by the pursuit of visionary schemes, which are not capable of being realised. Be content to offer Miss Ratcliffe a home in which she may really rest in tranquillity, and in which her wounded spirit may gradually regain health."

With these words, he left her; and on his return, informed her that he had furnished himself with a studio, which would in all respects suit him admirably.

CHAPTER IX.

Peace is nigh.

Eve following eve,

Dear tranquil time, when the sweet sense of home
Is sweetest ; moments for their own sake hailed,
And more desired, more precious for thy song.
In silence listening, like a devout child,
My soul lay passive.

COLERIDGE.

THE following day Mrs. Wilmot and Julian, according to their promise and their own earnest desire, sought Mercedes. We need not say with how much joy and gratitude their proposals were heard, nor how readily they were complied with. Mrs. Johnson, as soon as she comprehended the purpose of Mrs. Wilmot's visit, informed Mercedes that she had really, on her account, for some time delayed her departure from London, and that she strongly recommended her to profit by Mrs. Wilmot's invitation, as while in her house she would be able to prosecute without interruption the inquiries she was making for some situation that might suit her. She hinted also that they might long prove unsuccessful if Mercedes remained quite so difficult to please with regard to one as at

present. Mercedes listened with tears of which she did not declare the source, but left it to those who saw them fall to discover whether they were wrung from her by the ill-concealed harshness of these and similar speeches,—or whether they were effusions of gratitude for acknowledged favours, or solely of regret on parting from her true friend, Cecilia. We will say for Mercedes that they were neither the tears of wounded pride, nor of resentful indignation.

The orphan went forth from the home of her kindred, and entered that which was offered by friends, bound to her by no ties of blood, but who nevertheless bestowed all the affection of a mother and a brother. Soothed and cheered by their tenderness, and enjoying far more undisturbed peace than Cecilia had ever been able to procure for her, in a family where she received no hearty welcome, or than her impetuous temper, had no other cause of agitation existed, would have allowed Mercedes to know, she rallied more rapidly than she had ever done hitherto. She became daily more like her former self. The society of Julian had always been most congenial to her taste, nor did she find that of his mother less so, and Mercedes was peculiarly sensible of the charms of social intercourse with those whose minds and characters were in unison with her own. From such communion her nature was capable of deriving the most lively pleasure. Her feelings were acutely sensitive, her imagination easily excited; she needed sympathy; she could not rest

upon herself; an interchange of thought and feeling was necessary to her happiness. She had that species of egotism, if we must so call it, which Coleridge distinguishes with approbation from that which he unsparingly condemns; the yearnings of the heart, in its deep earnestness, 'which impels us to communicate our feelings to others; but not that egotism which would reduce the feelings of others to an identity with our own.' In Mrs. Wilmot she met with a ready and affectionate listener; in Julian she found more: she found one who anticipated her thoughts, and who shared with her the wish

To teach to others' bosoms what so charmed
His own.

The projects which had lately so much occupied Mercedes' were now, though not openly discarded, certainly almost forgotten; and if they recurred her to mind, they only led Mercedes to apply with increased industry to those studies which afforded her delight in themselves, and which she continued to regard as preparatory to the future accomplishment of the designs which she had planned. To the prosecution of these plans, while restricted to such means as this, Mrs. Wilmot offered no opposition, for all Mercedes' endeavours at self-improvement were superintended by Julian. The evenings which he passed with them were often devoted to an examination of the progress of the day, which infused fresh spirit into the exertions of the next; and in this constant, but quiet occupa-

tion, Mrs. Wilmot discerned a source of health and pleasure for her young charge.

Mrs. Johnson, though freed from the impediment which she had said that Mercedes cast in her way, did not immediately leave London ; Cecilia had therefore still the power of enjoying the society of her friend, for her visits met with as glad a welcome from Mrs. Wilmot as from her cousin ; and she rarely past a day without coming to see them. One day when alone with Mercedes, as Mrs. Wilmot usually permitted her to be, delicately refraining from imposing any restraint by her presence, and yet not allowing it to be perceptible to them that she intentionally withdrew—Cecilia said abruptly :

“ Mercedes, do you know I have been much more unhappy since you left us, than I ever was before in all my life ? ”

Her large eyes were filled with tears as she spoke, and she would not raise her hand to brush them away, because she feigned that she did not know that they were there.

“ Why, so ? ” replied Mercedes, throwing her arms round her tenderly ; “ tell me why so ? ”

“ I will, as nearly as I can ; I think that I can tell the cause. Before I knew you, I never thought of sympathy,” continued Cecilia, forcing her lips to smile. “ I

Never hoped on earth to find
A mirror in an answering mind !

I had passed childhood alone. I was used to muse

during long solitary walks, to ask questions which, if I could not answer them myself, must be left unanswered; and therefore when I came home, and found myself lonely still, it was nothing new or strange. I remained silent, but it was without astonishment or pain. But now it is quite different. You came, and you beguiled me of my silence. You led me to speak my thoughts—to compare them with your own; to give expression to my feelings, instead of ‘crushing them inward,’ and now I can’t contain them, though I try. If I repress and check one, another escapes meanwhile. I am always falling into difficulties and incurring pain. I really am unhappy. Can you tell me how to be less so?”

There was a mixture of playfulness in the seriousness with which Cecilia spoke, but it could not hide from Mercedes that her words expressed no more than the truth; not an exaggerated statement of it, but simply what she felt and what she suffered. After she was gone, Mercedes repeated her friend’s words, or at least, the substance of them to Mrs. Wilmot, asking her what efficacious remedy she could propose. Mrs. Wilmot’s compassion was as readily awakened as her own.

“Tell her,” she said, “to come to you as much as she can. I think your society is the best solace for her petty troubles that she can find; and that your friendship will be of real value to her.”

This advice was agreeable to the feelings of both the friends, and Cecilia readily complied with it.

As Cecilia's love for Mercedes grew daily in strength, the more earnestly and fondly did she meditate on her project for restoring her to ease and comfort. But greatly did she dread the opposition which she anticipated from her, and most sincerely did she desire to be her benefactress in secret. She felt, moreover, that half the sweetness of her friendship with Mercedes would be destroyed, if there existed between them the oppressive knowledge of this benefit. Nothing was so repugnant to Cecilia as the receiving thanks for any kindness conferred. She always silenced them with haste ; sometimes very abruptly—almost ungently. She heartily desired to forget her favours.

“Love me,” she would say to Mercedes ; “love me as much as you will, the more the better ; but it must not be as a species of payment for favours received. Though we are of a commercial stock, do not let us trade in friendship. Love me, dearest, but it must not be because one day I gave you that present, and another did you this favour. It must be founded on a sort of abstract notion of my character ; a confirmed idea, if you will, that I *would* give you whatever I had to give, *would* do for you whatever it lay in my power to do, at any cost. But it must not rest on a minute recollection of trifles, which you please to call obligations ; and which, if thus heaped together, will have no effect but that of building up a wall between you and me ; a wall of separation, Mercedes !”

“Nay,” replied Mercedes ; “say rather they will form a chain of indissoluble union !”

“My dear Mercedes, can you really propose to *me* to bear a chain? Think how cruel an infliction that would be! Nor do you look as if you could support a very heavy one,” answered Cecilia, with a laugh; and after this conversation she became more than ever anxious to fall on some method of accomplishing her design, and yet receive no thanks for it.

At length Cecilia’s family left London; but she was detained there. Her father had a severe attack of illness, and he desired to keep her as his nurse.

His fondness for her rendered her attendance on him peculiarly agreeable to him; and confined to his sick chamber, he exacted so much of it, that she had little time to seek Mercedes.

CHAPTER X.

Most generous, and free from all contriving.

SHAKSPEARE.

DURING her attendance on her father, Cecilia always past the morning with him in his library, where, though still suffering from illness, he transacted much business. He found her presence no interruption to him, nor desired her to withdraw as his visitors came and departed. Among them one day was Maxwell, formerly Mr. Ratcliffe's clerk. In the course of their conversation, Cecilia heard what had before reached her ears, that never was ruin more complete than that which had overtaken Mr. Ratcliffe ; and that never were speculations more wild and unadvised than those in which he had of late years embarked.

Her quick discernment made her readily aware that her father's animadversions on the conduct of his relative, though neither harsh nor exaggerated, fell unpleasantly on the old man's ears ; it made him sick at heart, to hear the past follies of his departed master discanted on. She was not sorry, therefore, when her father cut short the conversation by going in search of some papers he needed ;

bidding Maxwell, as he left the room, to wait his return. Cecilia, as quick as thought, without losing a moment of so precious an opportunity, approached the old clerk, and with no slight trepidation, but striving to appear as calm as possible, in order that she might not by her abrupt and strange proceeding confuse and bewilder him, said quickly, but in a distinct voice :

“Tell me, Mr. Maxwell, supposing that Miss Ratcliffe had a friend very desirous of relieving her from her impending poverty, could you not place her in possession of the sum of money designed for her, without giving her the slightest clue to the discovery of the donor?”

The old man heard this question with the greatest amazement, from which he gradually recovered, and replied :

“Possibly I could,—but alas!” continued he with tears in his eyes, “which of that helpless orphan’s friends, as they are called, will be disposed so to act towards her?”

“That is not now the question,” answered Cecilia. “If such an one there were, could he depend on your secrecy and fidelity?”

“He could,” replied Maxwell, earnestly. “But whither do these questions tend, Miss Johnson?”

“I will tell you. I will trust my secret to your keeping, Mr. Maxwell. I have a sum of money which, as soon as I shall be of age, I wish to transfer to Miss Ratcliffe, but she must never know whence it comes. Think how this can be

effected, and you shall hear further from me," said Cecilia, speaking rapidly, for she heard her father's returning step, and she resumed her seat at a distance.

The facility of proceeding, as far as Mercedes was concerned, which this interview gave her, filled Cecilia with satisfaction, and she now proposed to devote the rest of the day to a deep and careful consideration of the best method of recommending her design to her father, and obtaining his consent to its execution.

Now Cecilia's usual mode of proceeding was this. When any weighty subject occupied her mind, she would seriously intend to proceed to action only after the most mature deliberation; and yet, in spite of this intention, she would, almost immediately that she had formed it, rush to the encounter with apparently the most heedless precipitation. Sometimes she bore away the palm of victory so triumphantly, as to be led to think that, after all, a sudden attack was far preferable to the best preconcerted plans. Sometimes she found herself involved in difficulties, from which she saw no means of escape, and deploring her rashness she would vow never again to undertake to conduct to a termination any affair that required an exercise of judgment or caution. The remembrance of past misfortunes made her tremble at her present situation. At length Maxwell departed, and her father drew from his desk some letters, in the contents of which he soon became

absorbed; and Cecilia, not venturing to break the silence he maintained, was gradually no less buried in her own thoughts.

Bright and pleasant pictures of Mercedes' restoration to happiness began to float before her eyes, and letting her work fall from her hands, she sank into a delicious reverie.

Her father, as he refolded and laid aside the last of the letters which he had been perusing, raised his eyes to the thoughtful countenance of his daughter, and marked her abstracted air; but the beaming satisfaction of her eyes showed that she looked on to scenes on which it was pleasant to rest. There was, to her father's eye, a heavenly expression diffused over her whole countenance, and he regarded the picture she presented to him, in the easy attitude into which she had fallen, with a complacency which rendered him for a time unwilling to rouse her by the sound of his voice.

"Whither has your fancy flown, my dear child?" at last he said, in that voice of tenderness which was unconsciously habitual to him when he addressed her, and which, as it fell sweetly on Cecilia's ear, always made her heart warm towards her father with that ardent love which it was its nature to bestow on those who would ask, or only receive it.

She fearlessly turned her dark eyes sparkling with joy upon her father, as she replied spontaneously, without a moment's hesitation:

“I was wishing for my twenty-first birth-day to come.”

Her father smiled, and said :

“Why so, my Cecilia? What great felicity will its arrival confer? Are you so impatient for the necklace of pearls that I have promised you; or are you contemplating some further request which you think it will be impossible for me not to grant on such a day?”

Cecilia felt how nearly this last question bore on the truth, and she hastily continued in reply :

“I have a request to make indeed, but before that day. You know, dearest papa, that on my next birth-day I shall come into an independent fortune, all my own, at my own disposal. And that is the reason I wish for it.”

Her father was not a little surprised at this avowal so frankly made; but he quickly suspected that the gratification which she expected to derive from the event to which she looked forward, could not be of a selfish nature.

“Are you so very eager to acquire independence?” he asked. “I see you are not afraid to avow your desire for that of which you know I have no power to deprive you. Trusting in that security, will you proceed to tell me how you mean to avail yourself of it?”

Her father’s kind tone was far from inspiring Cecilia with fear, and springing from her seat, she came to the side of his chair, took his hand fondly in hers, and said :

“I only want to be independent for one day, one hour, one half-hour. Give me leave to do exactly as I like for that time, and then I will be content—nay more, best pleased, to be dependent on you for ever after.”

“Why, Cecilia, I was beginning to think that after that eventful day you intended scarcely to ask my consent to your actions. But let me hear what you design.”

“I design,” replied Cecilia, rapidly changing colour, and her lip quivering with emotion, “I design to give the sum of money which my grandmother left me to Mercedes, and to trust to you, dearest father, for all future provision for myself.”

And Cecilia cast herself on her father’s neck, and burst into a flood of passionate tears; then seized with the apprehension that her vehemence would distress her father, and be considered by him as a proof that she was scarcely a rational being, and little fit to be trusted with the direction of her own conduct, she repressed her sobs as suddenly as they had broken forth; and hushing them into silence, lay with her face concealed on her father’s breast, waiting for him to bid her raise it, in joyful acceptance of an unhesitating consent.

“And how long is it since you have entertained this scheme?” said her father, who continued to press her to his bosom, fondly laying his hand on her head, and smoothing the raven braids of her hair.

“Oh ! for a long time now ; almost since I first saw Mercedes.”

“It is a very wild scheme,” added her father gravely, “one to which there may be many more objections than you have thought of. Now calm yourself, my dear child. I will think of what you have said. I owe you so much, in return for your ready confidence. I will think what we can do for your cousin ; but mind, I make no present promises.”

Cecilia scarcely knew whether to consider this reception as favourable or not ; she felt that nothing would satisfy her short of what she had proposed ; but she saw plainly that she must not venture to touch again on the subject until her father should do so of his own accord, which he had evidently no intention of doing at present ; for he soon after requested her to write some letters as he dictated them. Poor Cecilia, who usually possessed the pen of a ready writer, now almost fell into disgrace as her father detected her in the act of recommencing on a fresh sheet of paper, an epistle which he had believed nearly brought to a happy termination.

“Thank Heaven !” she exclaimed as she concluded her task, venturing to smile as she looked up, “I am not generally so impatient nor so careless, you know, papa, but to-day I found it impossible to fix my thoughts as I wished.”

“Did you wish, Cecilia ?” said her father doubtfully.

"Indeed I did, and strove sincerely for success. Most heartily do I wish to please you in everything," replied his daughter bending over the back of his chair, and kissing his forehead.

"Yes," he answered, "only first I must let you please yourself, Cecilia. Is it not so?"

"How desirable it is then that the same thing should be equally pleasing to both!"

Her father smiled, and bid her go out for a drive, and leave him to repose.

"I am tired, child. Besides I expect my doctor, and he can amuse me till you return. Where shall you go?"

"Oh! to Mrs. Wilmot's certainly before I come back," replied Cecilia.

"Well, you may bring Mercedes to pass the evening with you, if you like, and if she like to come to see an old man with a gouty foot, nursed by a little daughter, active and ready enough, but not quite disposed to let him tyrannize over her, according to the established rule of plays and novels twenty years since."

"No," answered Cecilia, "I cannot exactly determine whether the world grows better or not, but since those days, parents certainly are improved; whether children are or are not I will not now stay to inquire, because, papa, you said you wished for repose."

And auguring well from her father's uninstigated proposition, she disappeared instantly that he might not have time to recall it.

In another moment, however, she flew back into the room, and hastily exclaimed :

“ Now, dearest papa, I implore you not to mention our intention to Mercedes. No, not for the world ! She would refuse to agree to it, I am sure. I know her better than any one else, and I settled with Mr. Maxwell this morning that she was to have it, without ever learning whence it came.”

“ My dear,” replied her father, seriously, “ I have not the slightest intention of speaking to any one on a subject which I have had no time to consider. I could have wished that you had been content to leave it unmentioned to others until you had consulted me. You are far too impetuous. You must learn a little self-command, or you will do many injuries to yourself and to your friends.”

Cecilia’s eyes were filled with tears at this not undeserved rebuke.

“ I have displeased you. How grieved I am !”

“ Let regret for the past lead to more thought for the future,” replied her father, briefly, and Cecilia, seeing that he was not in a mood to say more, again departed.

Cecilia was successful in her mission to Mercedes, and brought her back to spend the evening with her and her father. She was touched and delighted by the kind, and even tender manner which he assumed whenever he addressed his young relative. Pity seemed to modulate his voice to an unusual softness. Cecilia was not sorry that Mer-

cedes mentioned before him her still existing design of quitting her present tranquil abode, and making those exertions which she regarded as duties. As she watched with eager delight the approbation which her father's countenance openly manifested, and after her cousin's departure bid him good night with cheerful hopes (though yet unsanctioned) of obtaining his final consent to her proposal.

CHAPTER XI.

Pleasing was the smart,
And the tear precious that compassion shed
For her who pierced by sorrow's thrilling dart,
Did meekly bear the pang unmerited.

WORDSWORTH.

THE next day Cecilia was unable to visit Mercedes, and she passed the hours in eager anticipation of obtaining some reply from her father to her urgent request. As he maintained an unbroken silence, she amused herself by imagining every variety of speech by which he could possibly communicate to her a consent which she would not doubt of obtaining. She mentally held discussions in which she strove to give full weight to every objection that could be urged against her design, and combatted them all in turn with complete success. Most eloquent were the thanks which she prepared to be delivered after the attainment of victory. She grew weary, as evening approached, of these silent rehearsals of scenes that did not appear likely to be enacted, and she proceeded to put into practice a series of petty provocations which might, she hoped, lead her father to relent. Some men would have been induced to speak sooner, others more obstinately to prolong their silence by Ce-

cilia's attempts ; but Mr. Johnson was unmoved by them. At the intended time he broke through the silence which he had purposely maintained, and spoke to the following purpose.

He told Cecilia that at the age which she was so soon to attain, the law gave her a right to the disposal of whatever was her own ; a right of which he did not desire to deprive her ; nor would he shackle her use of it, nor frustrate her wishes, by laying on her any positive commands to which she might choose to yield obedience, though deeming their imposition arbitrary.

"If you at any time," he said, "proposed to do any thing absolutely contrary to duty, I would interfere, whatever were your age or the station you occupied. And if my most express refusal to sanction your proceedings could stop them, it should be laid upon you. Thus will I act by my children until I am laid in the grave. But in the present instance there is nothing wrong in what you propose. The very worst censure that could be passed on it, is that it is an inexpedient act. I would have you bestow due consideration on it, and hear attentively and weigh well all that I have to say ; but the final decision shall be of your own making."

"Then it is already made !" exclaimed Cecilia, joyfully.

"No," replied her father in a tone of grave rebuke, "I gave you no permission to make it until you had complied with the conditions I enjoined, and which you seem to forget."

“No, indeed, dearest papa,” said Cecilia, with real shame and regret for the hastiness of her reply; “I will not forget them. I have thought on this subject already for a long time, I assure you, and I am most desirous to listen now to any thing you have to say. I thank you too, from the bottom of my heart, for the promise you have made to watch over your thoughtless child, when increasing years have brought no proportionate growth of wisdom; a promise which sounds to me not like a threat, but a most kind assurance. But may I not hear what you wish to say without delay? We have a long evening before us, secure from all interruption. I will bring this stool, and place it there at your feet, which will look as if I meant to be extremely humble, instead of what you will find me—very combative and unpersuadable,” she said, venturing to smile again.

Her father submitted unresistingly to her arrangements, and as she placed herself on the lowly seat which she chose to occupy, he put his hand fondly on her head, as he began to address her thus :

“I will suggest one thing for your serious consideration, Cecilia. When you propose to strip yourself of a competent provision which Providence has bestowed on you, and to render yourself wholly dependent upon me, you should not forget that I am subject to the same contingencies as others, and Heaven only knows whether Mercedes’ fate may not, sooner or later, be your own. This is a weighty objection to your plan.”

“Nay, but father, with such a terrible example of imprudence before your eyes in your own family, you will surely be more careful for us, and will lay up something in the days of abundance against the time of need.”

Her father looked on her for a moment in silence, and then answered :

“I cannot help believing, Cecilia, that supposing I had made such a provision, you would be the first to desire that I should lay my hand upon it, when honour was at stake.”

“Thank you, dearest father,” said Cecilia, with glistening eyes ; “thank you for that belief. If all that I had were not previously given away, it would undoubtedly then be for you. What you have just said, makes me almost wish to reserve it for such a purpose ; but then your need of it may never exist. Mercedes’ necessities are present and real, so it must be hers, I think. And if anything happened to you, such a sum would be but a drop in the ocean ; nor would it suffice to do much for the comfort of my mother and sisters, while for Mercedes, it really is quite enough. Quite enough ! poor girl—if her father could hear such a pittance called quite enough for her for whom he amassed his princely fortune ! With regard to laying it by for myself, I am more disposed to obey literally the injunction of ‘take no thought for to-morrow,’ if to take thought must compel me to relinquish the performance of this act of charity.”

Her father paused awhile in consideration, and then replied :

“Well, I will relieve you from the immediate necessity of so doing, by making you acquainted with a design which I have lately framed, and speedily intend to execute. The disastrous reverses with which my cousin’s once brilliant career came to a close, and the consequent sufferings entailed on his child, which my heart has bled to witness, have shocked me so much, and have excited in me such a lively apprehension of beholding a repetition of similar distress in my own family, that I have come to a resolution no longer to endanger their welfare and my own peace, but to retire from business with the not inconsiderable wealth which I have at present secured. I might, it is true, look to gather a far richer harvest by continued toils, but it would be with a risk of what I now possess. My health was beginning to give way merely in consequence of the arduous labours of my calling ; still less can it stand against the additional anxiety which I have never been able to drive from my mind, since poor Ratcliffe’s miserable end.

“The portion which I intend to assign to my daughters, (and I have always declared that yours should equal that of the others) is £10,000 to each. This is a competent provision, but it is nothing more. The question which you have to consider, is whether you will divest yourself of what you may, if you will, enjoy in addition to it.

“This is a point for you to decide, and not for me. I certainly do not deny that I consider the first mentioned sum as adequate to supply your

wants. Otherwise, I should labour to allot a larger one to you, and to your sisters."

"Oh! my dearest father!" answered Cecilia, earnestly clasping her hands, and with tears streaming from her eyes, "if I am indeed at liberty to decide, if I have your full consent to do so, can you doubt my decision? Half the sum that you bestow on me should suffice my wants, rather than I would enrich myself by leaving my cousin in beggary!"

"You are young and enthusiastic. The time may come when you will regret your prodigal generosity, and ask why your father who was old, and ought to have been wise, did not restrain it."

"Now Heaven forbid that my love of this world's lucre should increase with years! This is an evil against which I will pray, and strive with my whole heart. Oh, father! when the hour of departure *must* be near, is that the time to cling to those possessions which we cannot take with us? How often do we say, when speaking of a temporary habitation it is not worth while to repair this, or to beautify that; if we were going to *stay* here, the case would be altered. So surely will it be with us as we grow old. We shall grow less eager to have wherewithal to procure the pleasures and the luxuries of life, rather than more so. I will never learn that worldly wisdom which would lead me to condemn the more generous sentiments of my youth."

"But, supposing that Mercedes should prove

ungrateful, and that you should live to regret that you had not taken time to select a more worthy object of your bounty?"

"I cannot suppose Mercedes ungrateful; but I will answer you as if I could. Strong as is my affection for her, I think I may venture to declare that in making this gift, I am less actuated by love for her, than by love to Him, who commends the fatherless to the care of His servants. Such being the case, ingratitude, though it might wound me to the quick, could scarcely inspire regret for what I had done. I should feel that I had 'cast my bread upon the waters,' and I should look to recover it again, though, perhaps, after many days. How often does my heart swell with the remembrance of those words, that assure us that what we do to the least of the poor in Christ, we do to Him! If they forget; He is not forgetful. If their affection change, with Him there is no variableness. If they misconceive us, He reads our hearts aright. Oh, Father! no disappointment awaits me here. Father, do you not perceive that God has here given me the means and provided me with the occasion of doing a good action? Oh! with what joy and thankfulness, with what trembling haste and eagerness ought I to avail myself of them! Discard all doubts of the wisdom of such a proceeding. Believe me, it is wise:—only ask yourself, if an opportunity occurred by which you could place me in some enviable position, by which greatness and wealth might be ensured to

me for life, or any great piece of good fortune, as the world would call it, be obtained; how would it blame you, and you, perhaps, would blame yourself, did you neglect to seize it, and I suffered through your negligence. Be not blind then to my real interests, dearest father. Such is now the case—I am in a most enviable position—do not let the time pass by in which you may, if you will, lay up for me treasure in Heaven, imperishable treasure, that cannot make itself wings, and fly away; as you justly fear that our earthly treasure may do. Remember, you who are so skilled in worldly transactions, the gracious promise of Him who fails not of His word, that what we give to the poor is lent to Him; and by Him shall be paid us again. Give me permission to cast my mite into the treasury, and He who approved of the widow for so doing, will also approve of our deed. Oh, Father! as I draw near to lay this gift on His altar, I have such a sense of my unworthiness to do Him any service, that my heart overflows with feelings of gratitude, such as Mary must have felt, when allowed to anoint His sacred head, and to wipe His feet with her hair!”

Her father was visibly touched by this earnest eloquence, while Cecilia, far from giving an exaggerated expression to her feelings, refrained from speaking them in their full force. She gave utterance to but a few of the deep thoughts that crowded on her mind. Nor did she, as she felt much disposed to do, cast herself on her knees be-

fore her father, and with tears and uplifted hands implore his acquiescence. She knew that she was always too vehement, too impetuous ; and painfully controlling her emotions, now sat in resolute silence.

“ And do you really wish,” asked her father, “ to accomplish this project unknown to Mercedes ?”

“ Indeed I do !” exclaimed Cecilia eagerly. “ Without this secrecy, I should lose half my pleasure. I would that I could verify the words, that the right hand should not know what the left hand does. But you are my right hand, dear father, and I am forced to let you know.”

Her father smiled, and then replied :

“ Perhaps when you have carefully guarded this secret from Mercedes, you will begin almost to resent her insensibility to the obligation.”

“ Impossible !” said Cecilia with indignation. “ I would not love Mercedes merely as the object of my favour, and exact a return of gratitude with scrupulous jealousy. I would love her disinterestedly, for whatsoever things are lovely those I can discern in her. This is the only foundation for a durable affection ; such as I wish mine ever to be—undying as my soul. May my friendships be ever based on esteem, or they will to me be sources only of restless misery !”

“ Heaven forbid, my generous child, that you should ever suffer thus !” said her father, tenderly ; and they then separated with hearts glowing with increased affection towards each other. They felt

as if in that night's conversation they had stepped aside out of the paths of trouble and turmoil, which one of them at least was daily forced to tread; they had shaken off the dust that soils the wayside traveller, and had gained a height above the din and confusion of the crowd. There they had enjoyed a brief repose, refreshed their thirsty spirits by a draught from the well of truth, and feasted their eyes on a fair prospect of the promised land, distant indeed, but still rendered clearly distinguishable by the bright rays of hope that illumined it.

CHAPTER XII.

You stood before me like a thought,
A dream remembered in a dream.

COLERIDGE.

ONE day Mrs. Wilmot requested Mercedes to accompany her to an exhibition in which she desired to see a work of her son's. She listened to the proposal at first with some interest and apparent pleasure; but the beam of sunshine quickly faded from her face, and she sighed deeply as she prepared to comply. Mercedes was still clad in mourning—sad remembrances, which continued to infest her mind, and the continued delicacy of her health made her cheek of an unnatural paleness, and her form was more fragile than it had been in former days. As she left the house, she said softly, and in a tone of inward satisfaction, scarcely designed to reach Mrs. Wilmot's ear:

“I do not think that any one would recognize me.”

Shocked at the melancholy truth which these words expressed, Mrs. Wilmot thought it best not to reply, and walked on in silence. It pleased her much to observe that, when they arrived at the gallery, Mercedes, though perhaps half reluctantly, manifested a curiosity, an interest and a pleasure,

in the scene around her, which none less congenial to her taste could have excited at a time when she believed her heart to be 'empty of all things but grief.' She seemed for the time to forget everything but the present, and gave her whole attention to the pictures around her. The delight with which it filled them to perceive how the singular superiority of Julian's picture distinguished it from all the others, and made it the object of general admiration, was expressed on both their countenances. The eloquent face of Mercedes beamed with a satisfaction long unknown, and the joy of Julian's mother was enhanced when she saw the brightness of her son's success shed a cheering light on the gloomy path of the orphan. While Mercedes wholly bent her eager gaze on Julian's work, Mrs. Wilmot was attracted by the earnest scrutiny of a young man of fashionable exterior, who had entered the room with a party which he quitted when Mercedes, whom he now anxiously regarded, first caught his eye. His sudden start of joyful surprise, his changing colour, his uncertainty whether to advance or to retire, all excited Mrs. Wilmot's attention, and she fell at once on the supposition that this was some former friend, (something certainly beyond a common acquaintance) who recognized the merchant's daughter in spite of her humble garb and her changed aspect. As she glanced at the unheeding Mercedes, she thought that at that moment she must look scarcely less lovely than in those brighter

days, when probably the stranger first saw her. The heat of the room, and the pleasure that was excited in her, had summoned a glow to her cheek and given a brilliancy to her eye, banishing the leaden look of melancholy which now ordinarily shrouded their beauty. Mrs. Wilmot little doubted that in the young man who hovered near them, she saw a rival of her son ; one who would come to trouble their peaceful life ; one who, to judge from his exterior, might prove dangerous to Julian. She feared also, that to meet with recognition from any former acquaintance, would cruelly agitate Mercedes, and yielding to this idea she prepared to lead her away.

“He is younger than Lord Sylvester can be,” thought Mrs. Wilmot, as she did so : “younger and much handsomer, I should think. Good Heavens, it cannot be his brother !”

Terrified beyond measure at the possibility of this fear proving just, she hastily took Mercedes’ arm. As she did so, however, Mercedes turned her head in the direction of the stranger, and her eye fell upon him, to Mrs. Wilmot’s inexpressible relief, without a glance of recognition, and would have wandered regardlessly on, had he not appeared to be, from the moment that he met it, irresistibly impelled to her side. He advanced, and with hurried accents and visible emotion, addressed her by her name, earnestly inquiring after her health. Mercedes at first, with much astonishment and discomposure, replied to his words in a voice so

low and trembling as to be scarcely audible ; then making an effort to recollect herself, and to recall him to her memory, she said :

“ Sir Alfred Rayleigh, I believe ? ”

“ Yes,” he replied, “ I am lately arrived in England. Are you,” he said eagerly, “ are you staying in town ? ”

Mercedes replied in the affirmative, and though her manner was, from the time he addressed her, abstracted and unexpressive of any interest, the young Baronet did not again leave her side. The gentleness of his voice, the delicacy of his attention, and the evident struggle that it cost him to veil his pity, awakened Mrs. Wilmot’s compassion for him, and she often replied to those remarks which seemed to fall unheeded on Mercedes’ ear. She also felt that, however unwilling she might be to see another bear away the prize which she desired to behold the reward of all Julian’s toils, she was by no means authorised to repulse the advances of others as long as he persisted in carefully abstaining from making any himself. She, therefore, listened courteously to Sir Alfred’s request to be permitted to call on Miss Ratcliffe at her house ; and without any false shame, told him the unfashionable quarter in which he must seek their humble abode.

Mercedes, who had sunk into absolute silence after Sir Alfred had joined them, did not speak again until they were pursuing their walk homewards. Then she said to Mrs. Wilmot :

“Why did you tell Sir Alfred Rayleigh where we are?”

“Why not, my love? Had you any reason for wishing to repel the friendly interest which he appeared so desirous to show?”

“I would rather never again see any of those whom I used to know. Oh! that not one of them might ever find me out!”

“Nay, my dear Mercedes, you used to know Julian, and surely of the many whom you knew, some are worthy to be still esteemed. Nothing could be more indicative of kind feeling and respect than the manner of the gentleman whom we met to-day. What footing his former acquaintance was on I do not know; but at present, I cannot see why you should reject his friendliness,” replied Mrs. Wilmot, who began to suspect that in him she had seen a rejected lover, who ventured to indulge a hope of future success.

“I knew him very slightly, and have no claim on his friendship,” answered Mercedes, coldly, and she said no more.

Julian passed the evening with them as usual. Mercedes talked to him of his picture, and her eyes sparkled with pleasure as she told him of the universal admiration she had seen lavished on it. Never had they appeared to feel such mutual interest and tenderness, and Mrs. Wilmot, as she silently regarded them, could not but desire that the happiness which she believed to be in store for them, might receive no interruption. Mercedes

had probably forgotten the occurrence of the morning, for she did not mention it. Mrs. Wilmot's curiosity had been too much awakened to allow of her doing so, and she waited an opportunity to allude to it, when their thoughts received another direction by a communication made by Julian, not without some caution.

"Lord Sylvester," he said, "is, I find, expected in town daily."

Poor Mercedes! All the past rushed back at this intelligence.

"I shall go to his house every morning till he arrives," continued Julian.

Tears started into Mercedes' eyes.

"I shall be very glad to see him," she said, in a voice of much emotion. Then, unable to control her feelings, she hastily rose, and left the room. Neither Mrs. Wilmot nor Julian felt surprise at the agitation she displayed, and they deemed it best to suffer her to regain composure in solitude. Soon after her departure, his mother broke the silence which Julian seemed disposed to maintain, by inquiring if he knew Sir Alfred Rayleigh.

"What of him?" said Julian, starting. "Yes, I knew him in Rome."

"We met him to-day, and he recognised Mercedes," replied Mrs. Wilmot, and she related all that had occurred, and all that she had thence inferred. "I cannot help thinking," she said, as she concluded, "that his visit will not long be deferred, and that he will shortly make an offer of his hand to Mercedes."

Julian listened with a disturbed countenance ; in return he related to his mother all that had happened during Sir Alfred's stay in Rome, the conversation which he had overheard at the Colosseum, and the young Baronet's consequent flight from the scene of danger. All that his mother had remarked excited in him the greatest alarm ; he drew the most inauspicious augury from Mercedes' silence on the subject, saw his present happiness overthrown, and himself driven back to the torments of the situation which he had occupied while Mercedes was bound to Arundel.

Finding himself unable to pursue these painful thoughts, and yet maintain that calmness of demeanour which is befitting in the presence of any other human being, and equally unable to drive them from his mind, he hastily took leave of his mother, and departed. Before he left the house, he stole with a silent step to the door of Mercedes' chamber, and listening attentively, he heard the voice of weeping. Wringing his hands in the anguish of the moment, he turned away, and rapidly descended the stairs. The blankness of despair never chilled his heart so entirely as when he closed the door behind him ; and in the time that elapsed between that moment and his throwing himself on his thorny couch, such was the distraction of his mind, that he scarcely formed a coherent thought.

CHAPTER XIII.

The monument and plèdge of humble love ;
His humble love whose hope shall ne'er rise higher
Than for a pardon that he dare admire.

WALLER.

Ho in odio me stesso, ed amo altrui.

PETRARCA.

WHEN Julian was restored to the silence and solitude of his own chamber, he strove to recover the manly fortitude which he had lost, and determined narrowly to examine the duties of his present situation, and to bring unhesitatingly into action all those sentiments of disinterested devotion which he had entertained before the hour of their trial came. He thought of the amiability of character which he believed to exist in Sir Alfred ; he thought of the rank and affluence it was his to give ; he thought of the proof of generous affection which he was about to yield ; and in the silence of Mercedes he read at least uncertainty as to the return which she was disposed to make. Meditating long and deeply on these considerations, he at last resolved to seek his mother early, and counsel her to aid Sir Alfred's suit by all the arguments which supported it, and by especially urging those he should suggest. In his

earnestness he frequently reiterated a prayer that his conduct might be preserved upright in the temptation that beset him, and that Mercedes' happiness might be ensured.

Julian was too sincere in his intentions to falter in the morning over the resolutions of the past night, and he returned to his mother's house before he went to his studio, and before she had risen. He seated himself beside her bed, and with a calmness which might have deceived any one but her, proceeded to tell her the result of his deliberations. He dwelt long on the happiness of seeing Mercedes restored to the station which she had formerly occupied ; a station not only freed from the dreadful anticipations of want, from which they, humble as they were, were able to relieve her, but one worthy to be adorned by her beauty and her accomplishments. He pointed out to her that if the disinterested love of Sir Alfred should lead him to seek Mercedes now, and lay his wealth at her feet, when she was forsaken by all others, they might justly believe that he would be careful of her future happiness, and would earn her grateful affection.

"If such be her happy destiny, mother, let us rejoice," he said ; and he rose to depart.

His mother held his hand wistfully ; he turned away his head from what he knew to be an appealing look. She saw that it was useless to expostulate, but she let him depart reluctantly, and sighed deeply as he disappeared. Touched as she was by

his generous self-devotion, alarmed and grieved at his impending danger, she still had no thought but that of faithfully performing the task which he had imposed upon her. She was not unconvinced by his arguments ; she felt that she should be untrue to her trust, did she fail to offer Mercedes all the counsels of a mother on this occasion. But though eager not to be misled by her warm affection for her son, she lost not sight of the real duties of a mother, and she knew well that they were opposed to such a line of conduct as should induce the young and friendless creature, whom she had taken to her bosom as a daughter, to forfeit her self-esteem, and endanger her true happiness, by accepting rank and wealth from the hand of one, to whom her heart was all the while indifferent. But was the heart of Mercedes indifferent, or was it even more than that : was it preoccupied ? Such was the inquiry suggested by the observations of the past evening. Mrs. Wilmot could not reply to this question ; her mind was disturbed by contrary hopes and fears, and at last she exclaimed, as she quitted her chamber to join Mercedes :

“She will resign her truest happiness if she resign the affection of such a heart as Julian’s !”

She scarcely expected Mercedes to have recovered the agitation of the preceding evening, but she was met by her with an air of mild placidity ; and her manner, if serious, was not dejected. Mercedes had of late struggled much to acquire an unvarying serenity, which she

thought she owed to the friends who strove to cheer her, and a self-possession which she deemed becoming one who was summoned by Providence to think and act independently. It is true, that she had not been able to hear of the near approach of Lord Sylvester, who had been so intimately connected with all her joys and sorrows, without uncontrollable agitation ; but this morning she had resumed her habitual composure, and spoke to Mrs. Wilmot, even cheerfully, of the pleasure which it would occasion Julian to see his early patron.

“I am sure,” she added, “that Lord Sylvester will sympathize with him in his late success almost as much as we do.”

These last words, and the sweetness and affection of the smile that accompanied them, rendered Mrs. Wilmot more than ever averse to her task.

Nevertheless, availing herself of a moment in which Mercedes suspended her occupations and pensively rested her cheek on her hand, she addressed her, saying :

“Of what are you thinking, my dear ? Of your expected visitor ?”

“Yes,” replied Mercedes ; “but he cannot be here to-day.”

Perhaps Mrs. Wilmot was a little surprised at this frank avowal, but she only remarked :

“I don’t know why he should defer a visit which he seemed so desirous to make.”

“Is he then arrived ?” exclaimed Mercedes in much agitation. “Your son has seen him and would not tell me of it.”

"Julian's acquaintance with him appears very slight," returned Mrs. Wilmot, rather coldly, on perceiving Mercedes' excessive emotion.

"Good Heavens! what is it you mean? Is Lord Sylvester in London, and when shall I see him?"

"Lord Sylvester!" replied Mrs. Wilmot in much astonishment. "Pardon me, my love, I thought that we were speaking of Sir Alfred Rayleigh."

"Indeed!" said Mercedes, with a look of sudden recollection and of some disappointment. "Indeed, I have scarcely thought of him."

"Well then, my dear," replied Mrs. Wilmot; "perhaps it is time that you should."

"I have no wish so to occupy my thoughts, unless there is very urgent necessity for so doing;" answered Mercedes.

Mrs. Wilmot was sick at heart, thinking what a day of suffering and of suspense this was for Julian, so that she was not disposed to be easily pleased; perhaps, she fancied that Mercedes' blindness was affected; she answered briefly:

"I thought there was, but you must know best."

Mercedes was silent; there was something in Mrs. Wilmot's voice and manner that gave to these words the tone of a rebuke. At length she rose, and came across the room to Mrs. Wilmot, who did not raise her head from her work, and throwing herself on a little low seat beside her, looked up into her face, and taking her hand, pressed it earnestly to her lips.

"My more than mother," she said, "dearest, dearest Mrs. Wilmot, I have no mysteries, no concealment from you, and yet you seem to think that I have. Let us understand each other clearly. This Sir Alfred Rayleigh—you saw that when I met him yesterday I scarcely recognized him. You could not think that I was playing a part."

She paused, fixing her eyes earnestly on Mrs. Wilmot, as if her life depended on her answer.

"Not for a moment, my beloved child," replied Mrs. Wilmot, stooping down and kissing her forehead, while a tear from her eye fell on it.

"Well then, if I scarcely recognized him yesterday, why need I think of him to-day?"

"Because he evidently thinks of you, most deeply."

"Do you really suppose that he does so? I cannot. Let me tell you all that I have ever known of Sir Alfred Rayleigh, and then you will judge differently. You know that I met him in Rome. I certainly fancied that he did fall in love with me, as it is called. Perhaps I was vain," she said blushing; "and easily persuaded of these things. I was more thoughtless then, and regarded other people's feelings far less than I ought. You have heard," she continued, the colour on her cheek burning brighter and brighter as she spoke, "of Mrs. Annesly Marchmont. Well, I was unworthy enough to feel proud to show her that I had my train of admirers, as well as she. This folly was very brief. I think I never indulged

in so mean a gratification but once ; but that once was when I met Sir Alfred. Nevertheless, only a few days elapsed before his departure was announced to me, and from that time I have never seen him again. Does not this prove to you that he must have been absolutely indifferent ?”

“No, I think that he had some other reasons for departing, and probably soon after he left you, he heard of your engagement. I cannot but think from his manner yesterday, that he will pay you an early visit, which may prove a decisive one.”

“What !” said Mercedes, glancing at her sable dress ; “will he not leave me unmolested while I wear this ?”

“In other circumstances probably he would, but in yours, his affection, which must be generous and disinterested, will prompt him to relieve you immediately from all care and anxiety with regard to the future.”

Mercedes wept, and Mrs. Wilmot most affectionately embracing her, lamented the necessity of having pained her.

“I had caused you either grief or displeasure, when first you spoke to me, I am sure,” said Mercedes.

“No, my dear child ; why do you imagine this ?”

“Because when you kissed my forehead, you shed tears.”

“Ah ! Mercedes, that tear was not for you.”

“Then you forget your own sorrows to think of me !”

“Your conversation, dearest,” replied Mrs. Wilmot evasively, “has relieved me of part of my pain. Now promise me to think seriously on this subject, on which I feel convinced that you will soon be called upon to act. May Heaven’s blessing be with you, and may happiness and prosperity be restored to you !”

Mercedes cast herself into Mrs. Wilmot’s arms, and bursting into a flood of tears, exclaimed :

“I can never again be so happy anywhere as with you !” then disengaging herself from her friend’s embrace, she retired from the room.

Mrs. Wilmot had cautiously refrained from telling her that her words were in any measure dictated by her son ; for such an apparent declaration of the absence of love and jealousy on his part, she thought would scarcely fail to influence Mercedes’ conduct.

When Mercedes returned, her countenance wore such an air of serene dignity, as at once to convince Mrs. Wilmot that her line of conduct was decided on, not capriciously, nor thoughtlessly ; and therefore, whatever it might be, she felt that she might conscientiously abstain from further counsel ; in this thought she found inexpressible relief. It was now past noon, and Mercedes found Mrs. Wilmot prepared to go out.

“What !” she exclaimed, with sudden uneasiness, “will you leave me ?”

“I will return in an hour,” Mrs. Wilmot replied ; “but my engagement is of some importance ; I am afraid that it must be kept.”

When Mrs. Wilmot was gone, Mercedes placed her hand on the bell, but paused before she rang it.

"No," she said, "if he come, I will see him. It will soon be over," and she removed her hand. An hour past, Mrs. Wilmot was not returned, and before she came, Mercedes found herself alone with Sir Alfred Rayleigh, forced to listen to his fervent protestations of love.

CHAPTER XIV.

Veggio a molto languir poca mercede.

PETRARCA.

Hear me, but speak a word—

Oh! thou wilt speak again of banishment.

ROMEO AND JULIET.

THE unfortunate Baronet could not credit that he heard aright when a calm, gentle, but decided refusal was all that met his ears.

“Surely;” at length he said, “you cannot intend that from this time I shall be banished from your presence? I have been too precipitate, I see that I have. Is it not possible that time, and a farther acquaintance may effect a change in your sentiments?”

“It is not possible,” replied Mercedes seriously; “it would therefore be most unjustifiable in me to afford you means of nourishing an unfortunate passion, which can only be the cause of misery, for it would be ever unrequited.”

He seemed thunderstruck; then he continued with that vehemence which weak men are most apt to display:

“Impossible; I cannot, I will not take your final answer to-day. Think of what I have said when I am gone. All my possessions I lay at your feet,

and if to you they are valueless, so are they henceforth to me. All I ask is that you will let me remain at your side. You shall be unmolested by supplications ; my patience shall be unwearied. You alone shall unsolicited appoint a period to my suffering. Consider what you reject. You have known prosperity and adversity. Would it be nothing to you to be restored to the possession of rank and wealth, even beyond what you have lost ? Your youth and your beauty demand that you should be reinstated in affluence."

"Such arguments as these," said Mercedes with increasing coldness, "are without force. Vanity and ambition have lost their sway. I have been rejected by the world, and have learnt the hollowness of its favours. The merchant's daughter in that brilliant sphere to which you would recall her, with her wealth was ridiculed, and in her poverty is despised."

"But the truth and sincerity of my affection," interrupted Sir Alfred.

"I thank you for it, from the bottom of my heart ; but I should be little solicitous for your happiness and my own did I consent to unite myself to you for life. It would be a hard trial for you to meet the displeasure of your noble relations, and for me to encounter their scorn."

"Oh ! that that false woman had not sealed my lips, when I was with you first ! If I had then won you for my bride, you would never have known the reverses of fortune that have befallen you."

"You are too generous," said Mercedes with emotion; "but I will not let you nourish false regrets. At no time would you have received any reply from my lips different to that which they now speak."

"To what then am I to attribute this excessive coldness? Spare me, Miss Ratcliffe, spare me the anguish of believing myself hateful to you. Tell me that you love another; entreat me to assist my rival; say that your heart is not your own, and that you cannot love me; do anything but tell me thus coldly that you will not."

His anguish affected Mercedes, and she seemed to falter.

"Tell me," he continued with impetuosity; "can the base, unworthy Wentworth still influence your affections?"

"No;" said Mercedes with majesty. "No, it is not so. It is true that I was blinded, misled, and abused. But it was a temporary delusion; the fruit of subtle art working on unsuspecting youth. It was a bright and pleasant dream; on waking from it, I wept. The reed I leaned on pierced me, but the wound was slight; and the very tears that I shed washed away the scar."

"Oh! if that heart be indeed unoccupied, let me at least try to win it!"

"Sir Alfred, it corresponds little with the generosity of your previous conduct, thus to seek to wrest from me a secret, which, if it exist, I may well wish to withhold. Now leave me, I beseech you, in pity to yourself and to me. How I wish to lose your love! Only remember that Mercedes Ratcliffe

knowing that when she was fortunate she could not return your affection, scorned in the hour of adversity to cling to the generous hand that was extended to her."

Sir Alfred seized her proffered hand, as she concluded these words; and pressing it passionately to his lips, rushed from the room. On the stairs he encountered Mrs. Wilmot; he hastily passed her by without a greeting. One glance at his countenance told her that Julian was uninjured.

Mrs. Wilmot entered the room which her guest had so abruptly quitted, and found Mercedes in a flood of tears. She approached her, and embracing her fondly, whispered:

"Imprudent girl!"

"What could I do otherwise? Would you have had me accept his generous offer without returning his love?" replied Mercedes, who easily read that her friend's rebuke was but affected.

"But why so prompt to refuse? Did he not touch your heart?"

"He did, to the quick," returned Mercedes, in a tone of deep feeling.

"Do not then dismiss him thus hastily. See more of him; allow him to visit you, and leave the event to time."

"You urge me," said Mercedes impatiently, "to repay his noble generosity by doing him the greatest injury I can inflict. All I can ever wish is, that he may forget me quickly."

In the evening Julian returned; but many

times he walked up and down the gloomy street before he summoned courage to raise his hand to the door and knock for admittance. His mother awaited his entrance with the utmost eagerness, and impatiently seizing his hand, led him into a room and closed the door.

"She has rejected him," she said; "I knew that she would."

Julian turned so pale at this announcement, that his mother was alarmed.

"Good Heavens!" he exclaimed, "is it possible?"

"Will you now be satisfied that she loves you?" asked his mother impatiently.

"God forbid that I should be the cause of her rejection of Sir Alfred," replied Julian thoughtfully; his mother heard him with a gesture of indignation, and Julian regardless of it continued: "I will see her myself. I have promised to be a brother to her, and I will open her eyes to the folly of this precipitate resolution."

"Indeed, Julian," exclaimed his mother, provoked at his adherence to his premeditated design, "I really believe that you are mad. No man ever took half the pains to win the woman he loved that you take to lose her. I am becoming so weary of your incorrigible folly, that I almost hope your attempts may be crowned with success."

"You must see as plainly as I do," replied Julian gravely, "that there is but one line of conduct that I ought to pursue."

“I see nothing of the kind. Attribute it only to the habit I have so long had of complying with all your wishes, fanciful or not, that I do not now go to Mercedes, and open her eyes to the truth which you so sedulously veil from her.”

And Mrs. Wilmot made a movement towards the door, which Julian intercepted in much alarm.

“Mother, I entreat you, if you cannot feel with me (and I believe it is your love for me that blinds you) at least do not act contrary to my will.”

“Well,” said his mother with a sigh, “I leave you free to sacrifice your own happiness if you will; but, if confirmed in the idea I entertain, that the happiness of Mercedes also is concerned, I must no longer remain so passive as I have been.”

“Let me speak to Mercedes this evening myself.”

“What! that you may convince her that you do not love her?”

“That I may prevail on her to act with prudence; all that I will ask of her is delay.”

“Well; so be it.”

His mother, in compliance with the request which he had made, left Julian in the course of the evening alone with Mercedes. Rousing himself from the silent abstraction in which he had been buried, and discarding the book which he had only appeared to read, he drew nearer to the place where Mercedes sat. When he approached, she laid aside the work that occupied her, and inquired if he had heard any fresh tidings of Lord Sylvester that day.

"None," he answered; "he had been to his house and he had not arrived. But you," he continued, "have had a visit from a former acquaintance to-day, my mother tells me."

Mercedes blushed deeply as she assented.

"Pardon me, Miss Ratcliffe," said Julian, with all the calmness he could assume, "have I not of late been honoured by you with the name of brother, and is there any service that a brother could perform that you would not look for at my hands?"

He paused as if for an answer, but receiving none continued:

"May I farther presume that the duties of a brother also devolve upon me; am I privileged to offer those counsels which would become the lips of one, and thus to prove that I feel all the interest in your welfare with which the breast of a brother would glow?"

"I am very willing," murmured Mercedes faintly, "to hear anything you have got to say."

"In truth," said Julian earnestly, "from the time that you needed a protector, I have looked on myself as your guardian, and most heartily have I striven faithfully to fulfil my self-arrogated trust. Rebuke my presumption, if you will."

"You have my warmest thanks," replied Mercedes, scarcely refraining from tears.

"Well, then, I will confess to you at once that my mother has made me acquainted with all that passed yesterday and to-day; and my most earnest desire is to prevail on you to retract your too hasty

decision. That your acquaintance with Sir Alfred Rayleigh is far too slight to allow you to pledge yourself in any way to him, I readily agree ; but wait for the result of a farther knowledge of his character, before you reject an offer, the generous disinterestedness of which says so much in his favour, nor fear that it will be difficult for you to obtain this requisite knowledge, before you entrust your happiness to his keeping. I will seek to become acquainted with his real disposition ; I will learn whether his affections have hitherto been fickle or lightly bestowed ; I will discover whether his conduct has been marked by rectitude and strict honour—”

“ Seek none of these things on my account,” replied Mercedes with dignity, rising from her seat as she spoke. “ My conduct to-day was actuated by motives which were dictated by conscience as well as inclination. I can neither repent nor retract. I have dismissed Sir Alfred, and cannot recal him. If by this proceeding I have disappointed my best friends, and even incurred their rebuke—” her voice faltered, and she could not proceed ; at length with an effort she added, “ I am indeed unhappy.” Then, without waiting to hear any reply, she hastily quitted the room.

Mercedes returned no more that night, and her pillow was wet with tears, not the least bitter of all that she had lately shed. The words which she often repeated, as she restlessly turned from side to side, were :

“He wished to see me the wife of a stranger!”

Under this sudden assurance of Julian's indifference, she felt herself sink as under a heavy blow ; she discovered that it was time to fly. She began to feel that it would henceforth be intolerable to her to remain under the same roof with him, and to see him daily and hourly at her side. But the eager wish to be relieved from his dangerous presence was speedily followed by a terror of separation, and a consciousness that she was practising a vain self-delusion in imagining that any pain could be compared to that of departing from where he was. Could she rise in the morning to commence a toilsome day, uncheered by his presence? Could she forego all expression of her thoughts and feelings to the sole person who understood and sympathized with them all? As proof after proof of his tender solicitude crowded on her mind, she resolved that she would not endure a voluntary exile from the side of the only being upon earth whose affection could suffice to render her happy. She anxiously repeated to herself every expression which seemed to disprove apathy, that had ever fallen from his lips ; and in her searching review of every trifling circumstance that had occurred during their present intercourse, she remembered, with an agony of regret and confusion, every unguarded word and act on her part that might have revealed the tenderness she now first detected only to desire for ever to conceal. Had her secret never been written on her countenance?—never

spoken in the faltering accents of her voice?—never betrayed by the hand that trembled beneath his gaze, as his directing eye followed its motions? He had given no sign that he had read, heard, or seen the confession. This blindness made Mercedes conscious that there was but one line of conduct for her to pursue.

“I must go hence,” she said resolutely. “I must not live a helpless dependent on their charity. I will rise and be doing. I will show them that I have fortitude and energy enough to provide for my own independence, and that I need not cast myself on Sir Alfred, or on any other for support.”

After the feverish and interrupted slumbers of the night, Mercedes awoke to reiterate these resolutions.

CHAPTER XV.

I' vo che sappi in qual maniera
Tratto mi sono, e qual vita è la mia,
Ardomi e struggo ancor, com' io solia,
Laura mi volve, e son pur quel ch' i' m'era.

PETRARCA.

LET us return to Julian. This morning he heard with joy, in reply to his usual inquiries, that Lord Sylvester had arrived on the preceding night, and that being informed of his repeated visits, had given orders for his admittance even to his bedside, which directions were now complied with, and it was with the most heartfelt cordiality that the two friends grasped each other's hands, and uttered the warmest self-congratulations on the termination of their separation.

Lord Sylvester asked after the lapse of a few minutes :

"How is Miss Ratcliffe? The last letter that I received from you told me of her removal to your mother's house."

"Where she is still," replied Julian, briefly, and not without embarrassment.

"Well, I hope that I have arrived in time. Remember, I must give away the bride. I will allow no one else that privilege."

"It is one that I cannot promise you, my Lord, for I know of no present occasion for exercising it," returned Julian, drily.

"Is that possible?" said his friend, casting a scrutinizing glance upon him, but rather in joke than in earnest. "Are you changed? A second Wentworth? You no longer love her then?"

"Still more than my life," answered Julian, withdrawing his eyes for the first time from the encounter of those of Lord Sylvester.

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Lord Sylvester, as a sudden thought struck him. "My dear Wilmot," and he took his hand affectionately, "can she have rejected so faithful a heart?" and he spoke in a voice of the sincerest commiseration.

"No," replied Julian.

"Nor accepted it?"

"No."

"What am I to understand?"

"That Miss Ratcliffe has learnt to regard me as a brother, and that I have sought nothing more. I consider myself as unauthorised as ever to do so. She has suffered no degradation in my eyes, and I have not reached any superior height as yet to that on which I stood when first she knew me. I will not say that were this last point altered, I might not then think myself privileged to act differently, but by that time probably—"

Lord Sylvester interrupted him with a gesture of impatience, little deeming that in these last

words Julian had relaxed more from the rigidity of his plan than he ever had before.

“My dear Wilmot,” he said, “I am glad I am come back to put an end to such folly.”

“For Heaven’s sake, my Lord,” said Julian, eagerly, “do not interfere rashly.” And before he left him, he proceeded to tell him, under strict injunctions of secrecy, of Sir Alfred Rayleigh’s conduct. Lord Sylvester listened attentively until he learnt how Mercedes had proceeded, and then he seemed much relieved.

“It was nobly done,” he said, “nobly done on the part of Sir Alfred, and not less nobly on hers, Julian. I will promise you that she loves you. Had her heart been free, it would have been vanquished by such disinterested affection.”

“He may yet prevail;” replied Julian. “I entreated her last night not to dismiss him so hastily.”

Lord Sylvester, whose hopes had remounted, felt really provoked.

“Will nothing satisfy you but to make her the wife of another?” he asked impatiently; and Julian, without replying, took his departure, promising to return home and inform Mercedes of Lord Sylvester’s arrival, and of his intention to be with her in a few hours.

He found Mercedes risen; she was very pale, and had evidently been weeping. She changed colour at his unexpected entrance, and the hand

she gave him trembled; nor were the tidings he bore likely to restore her to composure, although listened to with pleasure. So little was she able to resume her usual serenity, that Lord Sylvester was grieved to find that she received him with greater marks of distress than he had anticipated. He had trusted that time would, in a measure at least, have healed those cruel wounds which were so fresh and green when he had parted with her last, and though Julian had in the morning destroyed all those agreeable expectations which he had formed on hearing that she had found a home in Mrs. Wilmot's house, still he had hoped to find her soothed and tranquillised by the society of those who treated her with uniform kindness. Nor did he guess that the recent occurrences, with which he had been made acquainted, had occasioned this fresh distress of mind, and were in great part the cause of her present agitation. Mercedes was so much under the control of the thoughts which had tormented her throughout the night, that she could not refrain from making Lord Sylvester aware, in the course of their conversation, of the plans which she had never relinquished, in spite of the kindness lavished on her in her present abode, and which she was now more than ever anxious to accomplish. She told him how desirous she was to find some means of self-support, some permanent employment ensuring future independence; and asked him if he could assist her in her search.

Lord Sylvester listened to her words with painful

concern, and with a serious air, promised to take her desire into consideration, assuring her of his readiness to render her any service in his power.

Mercedes heard with pleasure the promise he gave to see her frequently during his stay in London. Just as he was about to depart, Cecilia entered, and he was struck by the bright intelligence of her countenance, and the warm affection of her manner towards Mercedes. Pleased to discover in her a near relative to the friendless orphan, he delayed his departure for a short time after his introduction to her, wishing to show by this attention, his cordial approbation of all who extended kindness to one so much in need of, and so deserving of it.

Lord Sylvester told Mrs. Wilmot as he went away that he had engaged Julian to dine with him that evening; and when alone with his young friend, (as he really desired to be, and had therefore asked no one to join them), communicated to him what he had not been able to say to Mercedes, though he wished it to reach her ears. He began by asking if he had heard of the death of Mr. Annesly Marchmont.

"Oh yes," replied Wilmot, "it happened not very long after the family left Rome. Did it not? Do you know any thing of her at present? She is in some gay capital I suppose."

"She was in Paris all last winter. I do not know where she is now. Who do you suppose was one of her greatest friends?—Lady Sylvester."

Lord Sylvester was much amused by the surprise with which Julian received this intelligence.

“What! I see that you would not have given either of them credit for such placability. You were, you may perceive, uncharitable. They are now as loving friends as they were bitter enemies. Now, with regard to Mrs. Annesly Marchmont, I will make no decision, but as to my step-mother, I really do not believe that she has a confirmed hatred of any one—unless, indeed, it be myself. I cannot remember that she has ever been able to make me of use, to make me further her plans designedly or undesignedly, in any one instance, and therefore I believe that she does hate me. You must not forget that Mrs. Annesly Marchmont’s present situation materially differs from her former one. Then, she could only mar Arundel’s fortunes—now she can make them; and the only part of their whole arrangements that has caused me the slightest feeling of surprise is that she has consented to make them. She has engaged herself to Arundel. I confess that there I did her injustice, for I believed her too much of a coquette to do so.”

Julian heard this information with indignation, but he scarcely apprehended that it would cost Mercedes any fresh pang to learn it. Lord Sylvester then told him of the intimation which Mercedes had given him of her intention of quitting his mother’s home; but his subsequent attempts to convince Julian of the irrationality of the line of

conduct which he had so resolutely adopted, were as little effectual as those of Mrs. Wilmot had hitherto been; he therefore desisted, for, as we have often before shown, Lord Sylvester was one who never carried expostulation beyond a certain point. He then proceeded, without any very definite design, or idea of what would be the result of the communication, to tell Julian that after they had parted in the morning, he had called on his friend, Lord —— who had recently received an appointment in India. He was a man of high reputation in matters of taste, and a liberal patron of the arts. Their conversation had turned on such topics; and he had started an idea of taking out with him to India, some young painter, disposed to enter on a new scene. He declared a generous intention to settle on him no insignificant stipend during his stay. While Lord Sylvester related this scheme, Julian listened with anxious attention, and made earnest inquiries into the particulars of it. On hearing from his friend that he was going that very evening to an entertainment at Lord ——'s house; he, without hesitation, entreated him to mention him as an artist willing to close with these terms; at least, if he considered him as qualified to accomplish Lord ——'s designs. Lord Sylvester heard this request with some surprise, but was on the whole disposed to comply. As there seemed to be no prospect of an union between Julian and Mercedes; he thought that an entire separation was advisable for the sake

of both, and he saw Mercedes, if Julian quitted England, provided with a safe retreat in the home of his mother. He was well aware that such a proposition as Lord ——'s, would be met by many candidates, and he therefore agreed to make an application without delay in behalf of his friend. He accordingly departed to execute his promise. Julian returned home, where he found Mercedes and his mother not yet retired to rest. They were engaged in earnest conversation, and the topic, on which they were discoursing, was the necessity for a speedy fulfilment of the designs which Mercedes had never abandoned. Julian could not refrain from declaring to them the probability of an occurrence, which must, he thought, accomplish his intention of putting such proceedings out of the question ; and he concluded his disclosure in these words :

“ Whatever, dearest mother, may be my inclination, I will not leave you for any time, unless Miss Ratcliffe will consent to make your home hers while I am absent ;” and as he said these words, he was about to take Mercedes' hand, and place it in his mother's. During this speech, Mercedes' face had been turned aside, so that her hair concealed it from both Julian and his mother. At the moment that Julian's hand approached hers, she suddenly started, and rising, hastily crossed the room, as if to leave it. If such were her intention, she was forced to relinquish it ; for her trembling limbs refused to support her to the door, and if Julian had not reached her side in time to catch

her fainting form, she would have fallen to the ground. The struggle of conflicting emotions, and the force which she had put upon them by denying them all outward expression, had proved too much for her strength; and the death-like swoon into which she fell filled both her companions with alarm. Mrs. Wilmot in spite of her agitation, and in the midst of the haste with which she sought for every possible remedy, could not refrain from exclaiming to Julian with angry impatience :

“ I believe that you have killed her ! ”

A glance at his pale countenance, and the despair of his attitude softened her anger, and recalled her pity.

“ She revives,” she exclaimed ; “ all will be well,” and at length, though not for a long while, poor Mercedes gave feeble signs of returning sensibility, and opened her eyes in all that perfect unconsciousness of the past, that follows a suspension of life. That something had occurred which had totally changed the feelings of Julian towards her, she was made sensible by the impassioned gaze with which his eyes met hers. She turned away her head, and a faint glow passed over her pallid cheek. At that moment, Mrs. Wilmot remembered some invaluable remedy which she flew to seek. Mercedes, over whose mind the whole train of past occurrences was beginning to rush, covered her blushing face with her hands, and shrinking from Julian, exclaimed in a low voice of earnest entreaty :

“Leave me, oh ! leave me !”

“No, Mercedes,” replied Julian, who was on his knees beside her. “Do not bid me leave you. Bid me never to leave you again. Forget all the past, and let us live only from now. Do not tell me that you do not love me. I knew not how great was my misery, until this moment of happiness was vouchsafed me ; relapse into your former coldness, and I feel that I shall die.”

“Your misery !” said Mercedes with a bewildered air ; “when have you been miserable ?”

“From the day I first saw you. Ah ! Mercedes, you do not know what it is to love, and to be without hope.”

“Is it possible that you can have loved me ?” asked Mercedes in increasing astonishment.

“Is it possible that you can have been ignorant of it ? There was no time in which I did not love you. From the day you first entered my lonely apartment, you have presided over my every thought and action. There was no pursuit that I would not have abandoned, if by entering on another path I could have rendered you greater service. There was no sacrifice, from which I would have shrunk as too painful. Would I not have given you with my own hand to another ? And now it is for you to banish me from my native country, and my mother’s roof, if my presence be irksome and insupportable to you.”

He paused as for an answer. Mercedes wept, as she replied :

“Why do you speak thus? Why do you deem me so ungrateful?”

“Oh! Mercedes,” said Julian, in a voice of the deepest regret; “it is not gratitude that will suffice me. Give me your love, or give me nothing. Oh, Heavens! your spontaneous affection never can be mine; it has been another’s.”

At these words, Mercedes started up, as if in sharp pain:

“Julian,” she exclaimed, “you treat me cruelly. Reject my love if you will, but you cannot doubt it. My secret has been extorted from me; if it be true that a heart that has been sorely tried is unworthy of you, leave me; and may time restore me to something resembling peace and tranquillity, and still these throbbings of agony!” she pressed her hands to her heart, as if to hold its beatings down. Julian, alarmed at her increasing paleness, and at the words she used, imploring her pardon and the permission to indulge in hope, however faint, at length allowed himself to feel “a sober certainty of waking bliss!”

CHAPTER XVI.

Chacun a son goût.

THE day following the eventful scene which we have described at Mrs. Wilmot's, brought Lord Sylvester and Cecilia there, and each was in turn informed of the total change which had taken place in the views and intentions of those who were the objects of their visits: a change which was learnt by the first with unmixed satisfaction and some surprise, and by the second with less astonishment, and also with less pleasure: for Cecilia had begun to be alive to her friend's danger, and to foresee the effect of her sharing in the suspicions which she entertained of Julian's secret passion. Not being able quite to reconcile herself to the consequences of such a discovery being made by Mercedes, she had resolved an attempt to remove her from her perilous situation. No sooner however did she learn how much the affections of Mercedes were really engaged, and the misery from which she had been relieved by Julian's avowal of his love, than every feeling of disapprobation ceased. If Cecilia loved, as it must be confessed that she did, to build

. Castles wondrous rich and rare,
Few castle builders could with her compare.

yet when these “baseless fabrics,” melted away from before her admiring eyes, she could submit to the disappointment with unruffled good humour, though not without chagrin. In the present instance, a little reflection, and her respect for Lord Sylvester’s opinions, which she could not suppose to be ill-grounded, soon brought her views more into conformity with his. The warm interest which he felt in Julian, made her believe that he was worthy to inspire such a sentiment; and sensible that, sincere as was the sympathy between them, the character of her cousin and her own, were in many respects very opposite; she found herself at last able to conceive that Julian might possess every qualification for making the one happy, though not the other.

Lord Sylvester, after expressing to Julian his sincere congratulations, informed him that Lord —— had listened favourably to his recommendation of him, the previous evening, and that if he was resolved to decline the post which he had sought, it was certainly his duty to do so without any delay.

“By the bye,” added Lord Sylvester, taking Julian aside, “whom do you think I met there? Quite an unexpected pleasure to both parties! An enemy of yours and no friend of mine, I believe; Mrs. Annesly Marchmont! Don’t start; Arundel is not with her, and if he were, you need not fear him now. She approached Lord —— and myself, just as I was talking of you. I think she was attracted by the sound of your name. She certainly

changed colour, and bit her lip rather maliciously. However, she bestowed on you all the commendations you could desire. 'Well, go now; but I am not quite sure that I would have you too hastily reject this offer altogether; for I think it is at least probable that, after a little more reflection you will come to a conviction that you have inflicted a great injury on Miss Ratcliffe's happiness, and ask my advice as to how you can undo all you have done, and place things once more on that very agreeable footing on which I found them.'

In spite of this caution, Julian went to — House without any intention of reserving to himself the power of accompanying Lord — to the place of his destination. Though he arrived at an hour that was unfashionably early, a carriage was already there, on which he cast his eyes as he stood waiting for the door to be opened to him. He observed that the arms were those of a widow; and at that moment the door unclosed, and a lady stood before him, whom he recognized as Mrs. Annesly Marchmont. Starting back with a look of unequivocal delight, she exclaimed:

"Mr. Wilmot! of all people the one I most desired to see—*here*," she added, with a smile which so much resembled a sneer, that it warned Julian that the pleasure which she so openly declared must spring from no kindly feeling. "I hope, however," continued the lady in the same sarcastic strain, "that you came here with no very definite purpose; that you had nothing so cruel in view as to rob your native country of so much

talent. If so, I must really rejoice in having most unwittingly defeated your design ; you once did so by me, do you remember ? To be sure, my fancy was but a silly one ; it mattered little whether it was thwarted or not. I think that I may trust in Lord —'s promise that a young man—quite a *protegé* of mine, a most rising genius ; do you know him ? (you ought) Loveday Calverly—shall accompany him to India, to exercise his art there under his peculiar patronage. It will be quite the making of him, will it not ? I hope that I have not unintentionally caused you a disappointment !” she said, with a glance expressive of so much malice and anger, as quite to disfigure a face that otherwise possessed all its naturally faultless beauty still in perfection, and she moved towards the carriage.

But Julian, who was determined to enjoy the pleasure of undeceiving her with regard to the injury which she evidently intended to inflict, followed her, and as he offered his assistance, which she scornfully passed by unheeded, said with quiet dignity :

“Mrs. Annesly Marchmont, far from occasioning me any disappointment, has but relieved me from some embarrassment ; for as my purpose here this morning was to decline the proposal made me by Lord —, I feared my conduct might bring on me an imputation of ingratitude. Lord — also will be spared the pain of retracting an offer which he once condescended to make.”

The astonishment, with which Mrs. Annesly

Marchmont heard this announcement, and the rage which it caused her, alike impeded her speech, and Julian turned and left her before she could recover sufficiently to give vent to her anger, or to utter any fresh threats for the future.

On his admission to an interview with Lord —, Wilmot found it was even as Mrs. Annesly Marchmont had said, and he came away resolved that he would beg favours of the great as seldom as possible. On his return home he did not forget to relate this incident, which, explained by an account of all that had occurred in Rome, possessed an interest for his hearers; and Cecilia was the first to express the joy which all felt at the mortifying defeat which the proud beauty had a second time sustained.

Mr. Johnson cordially rejoiced in the change in Mercedes' prospects; he was really glad to see her fair young face wear an expression of happiness again; his daughter had never made him acquainted with the more magnificent visions in which she had indulged, and certainly he had never framed any such himself. He had not given much thought to the subject; and when he now made acquaintance with Lord Sylvester, and told Cecilia how much he liked what he read of his character, he did not express either regret or surprise with regard to the indifference which had always existed between him and Mercedes.

He offered no new objection to his daughter's project; for he knew that though Mercedes was no longer unprotected and uncared for, still Julian

was almost dependent on his future and uncertain gains for the power of making any adequate provision for her. Lord Sylvester was equally aware of this fact, and at the very time that the banker was preparing to carry into effect his daughter's generous scheme, Lord Sylvester also was engaged in an attempt to fulfil the same purpose by other means. With this intent he sought the same agent, Maxwell. The results of his visit to the old clerk the next chapter shall disclose. They were important, and perhaps different from anything that our readers are expecting.

CHAPTER XVII.

Within your soul a voice there lives,
It bids you hear the tale of woe—
When sinking low, the sufferer wan
Beholds no hand outstretched to save,
I've seen your breast with pity heave,
And therefore love I you, sweet Genevieve.

COLERIDGE.

CECILIA in her frequent visits to Mrs. Wilmot's house, very often found Lord Sylvester there. Her frankness of disposition,

Where thought was speech, and speech was truth,

amused him ; and he took an interest in remarking the striking contrast afforded by the two cousins, springing equally from difference of circumstances and opposition of character. He saw Cecilia's eagle eye sparkled with indignation whenever she approached the subject of Mercedes' wrongs ; he discerned in her that ardour and generosity which made Beatrice wish "she were a man that she might eat the heart of the villain who scorned her kinswoman !" Not even from him did she consent to veil her disdain of his mean relatives ; nor conceal from him that the advantages of high birth and rank were become almost odious in her eyes ; that she looked on their

possessors with a predisposition to dislike them ; and that, far from feeling any ambition to approach the sphere in which her cousin had once moved, she regarded its brightness with aversion, and would have eagerly snatched any opportunity of manifesting to such as might expect her to draw near with awe, that she felt only contempt ; and that they must prove that they possessed claims to respect apart from their greatness, before she should be disposed to pay it. All these sentiments were very exaggerated in Cecilia's mind ; and the manner in which, in conversation, she sometimes gave expression to them, was much more so. The impetuosity of her disposition led her frequently to go farther in words than in deeds, while a playful malice and spirit of contradiction incited her to magnify rather than to soften the opposition of her opinions to those of others. Any attempt especially made to induce her to modify her first expression of them, always provoked her to repeat it with a lively mockery which silenced reason, while it was easy to perceive that her boldest assertions contained in them a germ of good sense, quick discrimination, and generous feeling.

One day when Cecilia came to see Mercedes, she found that she was gone out with Mrs. Wilmot. Saying that she would await their return, she entered the room where they usually sat, and walking up to the table at which Mercedes had been occupied, took up an unfinished drawing that was placed on it, which she regarded with peculiar

interest, because intended by her cousin as a gift for herself. While she was thus engaged, Lord Sylvester was announced.

"Pardon me," he said, seeing that Cecilia was a little disconcerted by his unexpected entrance. "I wish to speak to Wilmot; and they tell me that he will return with his mother. Have I interrupted you?"

"Oh no," replied Cecilia, "pray come and look at this production of my cousin's. I hope that you will look to admire. I do not mean that you may not criticise also, for as it is still unfinished, Mercedes may profit by your remarks. It is for me. She has promised that it shall be ready for my birthday, which is not very distant."

And Cecilia's eyes sparkled with pleasure as she thought of all the secret, as well as the acknowledged happiness which she anticipated on that day.

"My thoughts have been much engaged on your cousin to-day, Miss Johnson," answered Lord Sylvester, "for I have just seen Mr. Maxwell."

Cecilia felt herself colour as Lord Sylvester ceased speaking, though she could not imagine that he had any particular design in saying this to her. As she greatly desired to find out whether Maxwell had said any thing to pave the way to the discovery of the alteration in Mercedes' circumstances, she asked with some trepidation:

"Indeed! Why did he come to see you?"

"He did not come to see me. I went to see

him. In fact, I was very anxious to ascertain how Miss Ratcliffe's affairs are arranged before her marriage takes place, and I am particularly glad, Miss Johnson, to find you here, that I may be the first to tell you what will relieve your mind of any uneasiness on her account."

At these words Cecilia felt that it was impossible for her to remain where she was; her secret, she was convinced, was betrayed by her countenance. Starting up, with the drawing in her hand, she walked to another part of the room; then conscious that this sudden token of indifference, with regard to what she had to learn, must appear most unaccountable, she hastily inquired what Maxwell had told him.

Lord Sylvester, without betraying any surprise at her sudden movements, replied :

"He tells me that no inconsiderable sum of money has unexpectedly come into his hands, which, from the mode in which he has received it, he thinks himself quite justified in appropriating to the sole use of the orphan."

Here Cecilia felt convinced that the earnestness with which Lord Sylvester regarded her could not be without a cause. The colour mounted on her cheeks, for she felt on the very brink of discovery, and yet she knew not how to assume that delighted surprise which would be the only emotion naturally excited by such a disclosure. The agitation which she strove in vain to master, produced all the effect which she could have desired to simulate, for

it drove the colour from her cheek as quickly as it had called it there, and turning very pale, and losing all power of supporting herself, she sank upon a seat, murmuring faintly :

“Is this possible?”

The first look of surprise that she had seen on Lord Sylvester’s countenance was painted there at this moment, and coming towards her, as if he feared that she would faint, he exclaimed :

“Yes, it is possible ; but surely it is not possible that I am deceived in believing that the intelligence is no secret to Miss Johnson?”

“What!” exclaimed Cecilia, losing all self-command, and with eyes sparkling with indignation, “I have been betrayed!”

Then giving vent to her chagrin in an irrepressible flood of tears, she rose as if in haste to escape from the room. Lord Sylvester, seeing her intention, threw himself between her and the door, saying in a tone of entreaty :

“My dear Miss Johnson, pardon me, I entreat you, if I have given you pain. Do not go without a full explanation of all that has occurred. I must not allow you to depart while you suppose that Mr. Maxwell has violated the secrecy you imposed. It is true that his ambiguous replies excited my suspicions ; they fell first on your father. I pursued my inquiries, and found that I was wrong in my suppositions, but I was not assured of what I now believe, and rejoice in believing to be the case, until I had seen you. And why should it trouble

you thus to find that I am, in spite of yourself, admitted into your confidence? Believe me you shall have no cause to regret it."

Cecilia, embarrassed, and not the less so for the earnest tone which Lord Sylvester had assumed, agitated and still displeased, listened to him in silence, and with averted looks. She allowed him, however, to lead her back to the seat which she had so precipitately quitted. For a moment, Lord Sylvester was also silent, and when he spoke, his voice betrayed emotion.

"You shall have no cause to regret the knowledge I have now obtained," he said, "unless it be one to find how much the discovery of your noble secret has strengthened a presumptuous wish that my heart has felt ever since my acquaintance with Miss Johnson commenced, to gain an interest in hers, that should induce her not always to listen coldly to the acknowledgment of the love and admiration which her character has inspired—a confession that I can no longer refrain from making, be the consequences what they may."

Cecilia was so bewildered at this avowal from her noble suitor, for such he really was, so unable to conceive the possibility of its seriousness, and so utterly at a loss to express the feeling of dreamy astonishment that came over her, making her regard the whole conversation as imaginary, and doubt the reality of all that had preceded the last words of it, that, withdrawing the hand which Lord Sylvester still held, she could only exclaim

in accents of unfeigned astonishment, not unmingled with distress :

“What can you mean ? Why do you speak to me thus ?”

“What can I mean, dear Cecilia,” replied Lord Sylvester, “but that I would fain have you know that my happiness is now wholly dependent on you ? Banish me from your presence, cut short the brief intercourse which I have enjoyed with you, and you inflict the severest wound on it it has ever yet sustained. I learnt early in life that rank, and wealth, and high birth, will not purchase affection, though they may the semblance of it ; but from you I fear no dissimulation. If you feel that you can make no return to the sincere and earnest love which an acquaintance with your noble character has won from me, you will tell me so, and I must be content to return to an apathetic existence ; to indifferent eyes ‘secure in guarded coldness’ as before. That there is little in me to prepossess youth and beauty in my favour, I have not now to learn, nor need you fear to repeat a truth which never can be palatable, I own, but which shall be listened to with patient acquiescence. I have ventured thus to address you in the hope that during our acquaintance you may have made the same discovery (though not perhaps with the same pleasure that it has occasioned me) that there is a similarity in our thoughts and opinions, a sympathy in our tastes and feelings, that renders the happiness of each, in some measure surely, in the power

of the other. I know that to you, Miss Johnson, I have little to offer that you esteem ; that I have even much to ask you to forgive ; for the little which other women covet, you perhaps will spurn. You will confound me with others on whom you bestow a well-merited contempt."

"No," exclaimed Cecilia, eagerly, "you know that it is impossible to confound you with those to whom you allude. You are well aware that even before I knew you, I had learnt to esteem, to admire, to approve—" she spoke with impetuosity, and stopped short in confusion.

"And now, Cecilia," said Lord Sylvester, "can you not learn also to love?"

Cecilia was really at a loss to give a very definite answer to this question ; but though it would be difficult to repeat exactly what her words promised, we can safely say that they did not inspire Lord Sylvester with despair of her ever being able to accomplish the task which he proposed to her.

In fact, Cecilia had never for a moment contemplated the occurrence of such an event as the present ; it had never suggested itself to her mind as possible that she should be selected to fill that rank which Mercedes, with all her beauty, had failed to attain. This uncoveted honour had never appeared to her as a toy within her reach, and she had not asked herself, while laughing at, or despising those who sought such gaudy prizes, whether they possessed any power of charming herself. But while Lord Sylvester spoke with an earnestness that

placed sincerity beyond a doubt, there had risen up before her in that brief space many thoughts, (as is the case in times of strong emotion) compressed into one moment of life. She became sensible how it had grown to be the habit of her mind to recur, in every doubtful discussion, to the question : what would be Lord Sylvester's decision, what would be his opinion—his feeling? In what manner would he view a subject? What line of conduct would he counsel, approve, or condemn? She felt that the answer to these, and similar inquiries had become to her a matter of deep import; that his opinions weighed much with her, that she was disposed to like as he liked, to condemn as he condemned. Cecilia felt the conviction fast stealing over her that the gift of Lord Sylvester's affection was a precious one, which, having once received, she could never be content to resign.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Benedetta la chiave che s'avvolse
Al cor, e sciolse l'alma, e scossa l'ave
Di catena sì grave
E infiniti sospir del mio sen tolse.

PETRARCA.

THE discovery of Lord Sylvester's love was scarcely less surprising to Julian and to Mercedes than it had been to Cecilia herself, nor learnt with inferior pleasure. No outward token had hitherto revealed its existence, nor perhaps had Lord Sylvester been completely confirmed in his design of offering her his hand until he had become acquainted with the generous intention with which her warm affection for her cousin had inspired her. The charm with which this invested her was greatly heightened, as he attained a full conviction how sincerely she desired to maintain secrecy, and how unfeigned was the distress which she had felt on finding herself discovered even by him. True it is that the hearts of her father and her lover burnt within them to make her generosity known; but they had too sincere a respect for, and approbation of the principles which led her to impose silence on them, to break the injunction, either directly or indirectly. Mercedes and Julian were placed in possession of her gift,

but never throughout their lives did they learn the name of the benefactor who bestowed it. All inquiries left them so wholly without premises to build upon, that they were compelled to resign themselves to the tranquil enjoyment of the good which so unexpectedly fell to their share, and to be content to testify their gratitude to their unknown friend only by the utterance of those heart-felt prayers which it dictated.

It was naturally gratifying to Mr. Johnson to see his beloved daughter the choice of a man whose character laid claim to the highest esteem, and who, actuated solely by his just appreciation of her excellent qualities, conferred on her a distinction which, though not unduly prized, nor meanly courted by the worthy banker, was not without value and dignity in his eyes.

As for Mrs. Johnson, to Cecilia's great relief she was overwhelmed with astonishment, and so awed by her respect for Lord Sylvester's rank, that she was quite unable to pour forth those profuse acknowledgments of gratitude, and expressions of satisfaction and joy, which her daughter had anticipated with dread.

In the midst of the happiness which now pervaded the little circle into which we have introduced our readers, (and from which we design speedily to allow them to retreat), there was one mind on which a painful thought still crushed heavily. It was Mercedes who could not expel the unwelcome intruder. She silently considered how she might

destroy it for ever; and one day when she was meditating on it in solitude, Julian entered, and her natural ingenuousness suggested the means of depriving it of all power of molesting her for the future.

"Julian," she said, timidly, but resolutely, raising her eyes from a book which she held, as he drew near, "you have said one cruel thing to me, and I will go back to it and recall it now, that it may never more come to grieve me. You said," she continued, regardless of his surprise, in a voice tremulous with emotion, "that my first, my spontaneous affection would never be yours, for it had been another's. You meant that Arundel had been the free choice of my heart, and that you were forced upon me by the cry of gratitude. I will for once tell you briefly my real sentiments on this subject; and you will not doubt my word?" she asked, appealingly.

"For Heaven's sake," said Julian, "spare me the shame of thus forcing you back to painful retrospections, and that too by words spoken at a moment when I ought to have uttered only the most fervent thanks. Pardon me, and prove that you do so by silence."

"No," replied Mercedes, struggling to be calm, and speaking in a low, hurried voice. "No, I must speak now—yes, and go back to scenes I would willingly efface from my memory; but I cannot do so, if they be still to exist in yours. I never knew myself until now. I have learnt of

late how my fancied love for Arundel was but a wild and hurried dream ; from the beginning to the end, always without reality. I was a dupe, not of myself, as many are—nor even to him, as I might have been. Lady Sylvester won my fondest affection by falsehood—she induced me to extend it to Arundel by falsehood. She obtained it for him, much more than he did for himself ; for by falsehood she convinced me of his sincerity, and of his earnestness, when his conduct made me doubt both. She made it appear pleasant to me, to become her daughter. Her fascinating manners, the immeasurable distance which there seemed to be between us ; her cultivated grace, the perfect propriety of her every action and word, the dignity of her self-possession, and the sweetness of her affability ; all these charms worked a most powerful spell. To think that her son sought me for his bride filled my heart with pleasure, elated my vanity, and blinded my reason. But the still small voice of truth would sometimes make itself heard, and I began to feel, before the veil was finally torn aside, that when with Lord Sylvester and you, or with his mother alone, I enjoyed a happiness which the presence of Arundel destroyed rather than enhanced. The antipathy that existed between you was visible to me, and I would occasionally reproach myself with sparing too much of my time, and of my thoughts to pursuits and pleasures in which Arundel would take no share. The unacknowledged sense of this painful incongruity of

character and taste, began to weigh heavily on my mind, and to quell my spirit. You saw the change in me ; I am sure that you did, for I remember a conversation in which you alluded to it. But I shunned the subject with an indefinite dread. I shrank in dismay from it. Providence withdrew the veil which I had feared to lift : I recoiled in horror from that which I beheld. But very ill have you as yet read my feelings, if you have deemed that I looked back with regret to the days of delusion. Many, many times have I been called on to lift up my heart in gratitude to Heaven for blessings received :

Evils turned to good,
And wishings crossed, which I have seen full soon,
Had led to the house of sorrow ;

but never so much as for this, the crowning blessing of my lot, that I have been saved from Wentworth to be given to you."

While Mercedes had been speaking these words, her countenance had varied rapidly. Her burning cheek told how she did violence to her timid nature, when, forced to speak for once the deeply rooted feelings of her inmost heart, she cast aside for awhile the veil of reserve that hid them from the light ; and her sparkling eyes had proclaimed for a brief moment (for the feeling that spoke out in them lasted but so long) the indignant scorn with which she had banished for ever from her heart the world's minion, who had for awhile enthralled her. That gleam past, and as Julian's words of love

fell on her ear, her own nature, 'so delicately gentle, soft, and pure,' resumed its reign; and while she listened to entreaties that she would never again strive to remove, doubts and fears that could never again recur, she buried her face in her hands to conceal both her blushes and her tears.

While Julian continued to speak, she made no answer; but a previous thought recurred to her, and removing her hands, she took the book which lay open beside her, and giving it to him, pointed still in silence to these lines:

To soothe thy sickness, watch thy health;
Partake, but never waste thy wealth,
Or stand with smiles, unmurmuring by
And lighten half thy poverty—
Do all but close thy dying eye,
And that I could not live to try:
To this alone my thoughts aspire,
More can I give, or thou require?

Her eyes continued to rest on the page after she felt that Julian's had ceased to do so, and without raising them to meet his, she repeated the last line in a low earnest voice of inquiry, upbraiding in its tenderness.

Was Julian satisfied? Mercedes felt that he was.

CHAPTER XIX.

Fate to virtue paid her debt,
And for their troubles bade them prove
A lengthened life of peace and love ;
Time and tide had thus their sway,
Yielding like an April day,
Smiling noon for sullen morrow,
Years of joy for days of sorrow.

ROKEBY.

THE only part of our task which now remains unfulfilled is to endeavour to furnish such information with respect to the future fortunes of those whom we have introduced to our readers, as shall sufficiently answer all inquiries that they may feel disposed to make. May we also, without presumption, express a hope, perhaps an ill-grounded one, that our *dénouement* of a very long story may have given general satisfaction ? These pages are dismissed with a wish that none who weary in the beginning will toil on to the end ; and that those who reach the end will find no diminution of that pleasure which it is supposed they must have felt in its progress, as it alone could have been the inducement to proceed.

Julian did not fail to attain that excellence and that fame which his spirit desired, and his genius

placed at his command. Mercedes, endowed with understanding and with taste, that made his pursuits and his pleasures her own, shared the happiness which she conferred, and looked back without regret to the station from which she had fallen, and which was, in fact, in all but wealth, eventually more than regained by the success and distinction with which Wilmot's labours were crowned.

Mrs. Wilmot, in the happiness of her children, contemplated with satisfaction the result of her own unhesitating performance of a duty enjoined by grateful friendship, yet still of a nature so uncommon, that many would have considered themselves exempt from such a task. She could clearly trace back the origin of her son's good fortune to Mr. Ratcliffe's eager desire duly to discharge his obligations to her. It was his liberality that had first opened to Julian the career which he had so successfully run.

Lord Sylvester's acquaintance, and even friends, were undoubtedly greatly amazed at his choice of a wife having delayed so long to choose any; nor did their amazement quickly subside when first they saw and knew Cecilia. When they compared Mercedes, such as she had been when Lady Sylvester originally introduced her into their coterie, distinguished alike for the brilliancy of her beauty and the reputation of her immense wealth, with her cousin, who was but moderately endowed with either, they were at a loss to conceive why the heart of Lord Sylvester had resisted the charms of

the one, and yielded to those of the other. He, however, found the expectations which he had formed, fully realized in the development of the noble character of his wife. It was his delight to watch its progress, to check her impetuosity, and curb her rashness, while he gave full scope to all her generous impulses ; and placing no restraint beyond what was due on her liberality, he rejoiced in beholding her adored by the poor and the afflicted, as a guardian angel whose mission on earth was the relief of their necessities.

Cecilia, whose affectionate and susceptible nature caused her to be much influenced by those with whom she lived, lost all her wilfulness when she experienced only tenderness. Believing that she might rely implicitly on the undeviating principles and excellent judgment of her husband, she laid aside all rash confidence in herself, and that hasty presumption in opinion and in action, which had originated in the little deference she had felt to be due to those who had formerly surrounded her. When made acquainted with all whom Lord Sylvester honoured as friends, she recognized, and confessed with candour, that the virtues of truth, meekness, humility, and self-denial, may be discovered among those who yet are graced with high birth, rank, beauty, and wealth, and who are called on to occupy the most splendid positions.

It was the fate of Arundel Wentworth never to be united to Mrs. Annesly Marchmont ; and yet, if he ever felt an emotion worthy of the name of

love for any one but himself, it was for her. When she was assured that Lord Sylvester was absolutely about to marry, a probability which she had never contemplated, she hastened to discard Arundel. She easily found a plausible pretext for so doing. She first of all broke off her friendship with his mother ; and soon afterwards declared, and found her declaration believed, that the tempers of both mother and son were so insupportably haughty, tyrannical, and insolent, that she could not continue to submit to them. Mrs. Annesly Marchmont was by no means highly born, and had been destitute of any other means of acquiring distinction than the remarkable loveliness which she undeniably possessed. By marrying an old and miserable hypochondriac, she had attained her first object—wealth ; by a second union she was resolved to win what she next coveted, rank. The moment that Wentworth was stripped of all prospect of a coronet, he became as contemptible in her eyes as a knowledge of his real character had rendered him in those of Mercedes. Mrs. Annesly Marchmont sustained no defeat in the present object of her pursuit. She married Lord —, over whom we have shewn her exercising sufficient influence to make him retract a given promise in order to comply with her solicitations. She accompanied him to India, where, in her eastern court, she ruled with that despotic sway which was so delightful to her. Her reign was however brief ; for

Lord ——— did not long retain possession of that office to which she owed her power; nor did he sufficiently distinguish himself in the performance of his duties to be entrusted with any similar ones again.

Arundel Wentworth eventually won the hand of a rich heiress, who, young, unprotected, and scarcely emancipated from the rigours of the school-room, thoughtlessly bestowed it on the first suitor with a pleasing exterior and agreeable manners who asked it. She quickly repented her unwise decision; for Wentworth, resenting his desertion by the only woman whom he had ever loved, (as he said) and detesting the one whom he had sought and won, adopted the character of a reckless and disappointed man, considering himself, by so doing, as privileged to treat his wife with total disregard, and to abuse the confidence which she had reposed in him. His wild extravagance, and a fatal propensity for gambling which he soon manifested, dissipated her wealth, and finally plunged him into disgrace, which compelled him to absent himself from his native land. He selected Paris as his place of refuge. There his mother, also, had taken up her abode. Reduced to defray her expenses by her own slender means, she preferred a residence on the continent to one in England, as the expedients by which alone she was enabled to procure the luxuries and the amusements which were indispensable to her, appeared less degrading when practised not immediately under the eyes of her

former associates. Mrs. Arundel Wentworth returned to her own family to await the time when her husband's affairs might be more creditably managed. Happily for her, an early death released her from a pitiable lot. Lady Sylvester and her son lived to add fresh examples to the many that had gone before them, that a youth of frivolity, selfishness, and vanity, is usually succeeded by an old age equally destitute of all qualities that can command reverence, or win affection.

CONTRITION.

PART I.

Nought is there under Heaven's wide hollownesse
That moves more dear compassion of the minde
Than beauty brought to unworthy wretchednesse,
By envie's snares, or fortune's freaks unkinde.

SPENSER.

CONTRITION.

CHAPTER I.

One dyes in the bud, and another in the bloome; some in the fruite; few, like the sheafe, that come to the barne in a full age.

Man cares not so much for life as for that which steals it away—pleasure.

OWEN FELTHAM'S RESOLVES.

How omnipotent is Death! How mighty is his arm! What strength can defy it? How extensive is his sway! What realm is uninvaded? Can the proud hero, who slays his thousands and his tens of thousands, compete with him? The most ruthless exterminator of the human race, the most insatiable seeker of the blood of his fellow-men, while triumphantly usurping his sceptre, must sink beneath his touch, and join with their victims in acknowledging his supreme dominion.

Not an hour passes that finds him idle! In this brief moment how many expiring wretches, in every part of the globe are joining the kingdom of the dead! How many departing, exulting and despairing souls are ascending to the judgment-seat!

How profound a lesson might we learn could we behold but a few of those scenes of death that are *now* enacting even while we write !

Many the shapes
Of death, many are the ways that lead
To his grim cave—all dismal :
Some, by violent stroke shall die—
By fire, flood, famine ; by intemperance, more.

All maladies
Of ghastly spasm, or racking torture, qualms
Of heart-sick agony. All fev'rous kinds—
Demoniac phrenzy, moping melancholy.
Dire the tossing, deep the groans ;
And over them triumphant Death his dart shakes.

But the lessons afforded in the chambers of death would not be taught by the dying only. From the attendants in those apartments we should quickly learn some of the saddest secrets of humanity. Unmasked by the force of passion, or startled by unlooked-for events into casting aside the veil of caution or dissimulation, they would suffer us to read the human heart as it is not to be read in any other page of its history. We might 'gain our experience, and our experience would make us sad,' and we should be naturally led to imagine that there the proud man would cease to feel pride, and the worldly man to covet the world's goods.

Yet, though death be surely an awful thing, it cannot overcome the cares of life. The grasping heir, the hungry kinsman, and the cringing sycophant, do not grow less greedy when they have

before their eyes the evidence of the nothingness of life. They watch beside the sick man's bed with an anxiety to snatch his possessions from his failing grasp, which they had not hitherto dared to betray, but which now they scarcely refrain from openly avowing.

In the chambers of the dying how many tears are shed ! Tears of love and of hate ; tears of grief and of rage ; tears of sympathy ; tears of disappointment ; feigned tears, and the natural outpourings of a pierced heart ! The tears of the Christian for whom it is good to be afflicted, and the tears of the natural man, who mourns at first as one who will not be comforted, and straightways goes forth and forgets all serious thought amid the cares, or even the pleasures, or even the idle, perhaps sinful diversions of the world !

Lord Llarnarmon watched beside the death-bed of his eldest son ; and like David, he wept and prayed while the sickness threatened, but life and hope remained ; and like David, he ceased to weep and pray when they were gone, and the heir of Llarnarmon, in spite of his efforts, was borne to that last abode whence none return. But very different were the feelings of the fathers' hearts ; very different the clue to their conduct. We do not say that his anguish ceased with his son's departed breath ; but in spite of the heavy affliction Providence had dispensed to him, Lord Llarnarmon remained Lord Llarnarmon ; and the first tide of grief stemmed, he returned to his old views, his

old meditations, to indulge the same passions, and to foster the same plans. Ambition had through life been his grand aim, and his eldest son had been the idol, not of his affections, but of his ambition ; so that when he ceased to exist, on the abatement of a little natural grief, his thoughts wholly turned towards finding another similar instrument for the execution of his designs. Such he knew existed, though he scarcely knew where at the present moment. To what part of the globe had his harsh indifference allowed his only surviving child to wander, hitherto neglected, despised, scarcely even recognized ? Now, having become necessary to the accomplishment of his cherished designs for the aggrandizement of his family, he was to be immediately sought for, and summoned to a home which for him had not hitherto even borne that name.

Of his two children, the eldest had been endeared to Lord Llarnarmon, not only by position, but also by character. Of a high and daring spirit, enterprising, haughty, and overbearing, easily imbibing his father's maxim, that all things were to be subservient to his will, the selfishness inherent in his nature was brought to an early maturity by the fostering care bestowed upon it ; and it was only the impetuosity of youth which rendered him more desirous than was Lord Llarnarmon to unite the pursuits of pleasure with those of interest. His father, who encouraged his presumption, was willing that he should have individual pursuits that might prevent his interference

with his own plans, designed it is true for their mutual advantage, but in which he wished him to be concerned only when he became necessary to their execution.

With regard to the other child, born shortly before his mother's death, he was of a sickly constitution, the infirmities of which greatly aggravated his natural nervous timidity of temperament, and gave him in the eyes of his father, and of all who did not care to soothe him by gentleness into confidence, an appearance of imbecility which did him great injustice. Had he possessed half his brother's self-confidence, his capacity would have enabled him to outstrip him far in every mental acquirement ; but owing to the comparative unimportance of his station, and the terror the poor child felt, and could not conceal in the presence of his father, Lord Llarnarmon commonly treated him with a neglect of which he was not too young to feel the indignity ; while by his hesitation, his tears, his burning blushes, when his father addressed him hastily, instead of moving compassion, the boy only provoked additional severity and impatience.

When Eustace had reached his tenth year, his father meeting with a friend who was about to entrust the education of his son to a Swiss clergyman residing at Lausanne (a man of much erudition and respectable character, with whom this gentleman had been connected in early life) who was willing to undertake the task for a remuneration, trifling in comparison to that bestowed for such

services in England, determined to dispatch the little Eustace with young Mordaunt ; and his resolution being once taken, arrangements were quickly completed, and the day for their departure decided upon.

The only being in his native home that bestowed all its affection on poor Eustace, was a little dog which he had been permitted to call especially his own, principally because it was a possession that no one else coveted. This had been his chief play-fellow and friend, and was rarely noticed by his brother Vincent, but by a kick or a cuff. On the morning of his departure, Dash was comfortably ensconced in the corner of the carriage that was to convey his master from his father's castle to Mr. Mordaunt's house. After receiving the parting embraces of his father and brother, with a heart saddened he scarce knew why, Eustace sprang into the carriage where Dash received him with a torrent of caresses. Alas ! poor Dash ! why could you not remain tranquil only a few minutes longer, till the park gates were past, and you were alone with your master ? His noisy transports excited the notice of Vincent, who was lingering at the door ; in a sudden fit of passion, such as was never resisted by his father's menials, he demanded that the dog should instantly be taken from the carriage, and given back to him. In vain did Eustace weep and pray. Vincent's servant, putting him aside with a strong arm, tore the dog from his grasp, and committed it to his young

master, who scarcely heard, and did not at all regard the eloquence of his brother's supplications. The carriage door was closed, and as it rolled away, Eustace shrank back into a corner, and shed the bitterest of all the bitter tears that had ever trickled down his infant cheek.

The next six years of Eustace's life were the happiest, for they were the most tranquil of his existence. M. De la Broche did not neglect his duty to the two boys; but after instilling a due quantity of learning into their minds, and devoting a fair portion of his time to them, was very glad to sink back into his ordinary state of literary abstraction, and allowed them to find their own diversions and employments. These they principally sought in pedestrian excursions among the mountains; and incited by a spirit of adventure and of emulation, they braved many a danger, and despised many a hardship. Under this healthy discipline, the feeble Eustace gradually improved in strength and spirits. Unfortunately for him in all these respects, with reference to mind as well as body, he was after a three years' residence deprived of his young companion, and no other came to fill his place. He still remembered home with too much dread to feel any wish to return thither. Though he was grieved at Mordaunt's departure, the shyness and reserve of his disposition prevented him from seeking any other companion of his own age to supply his place. He found that in silence and in solitude his imagination could

depict for him scenes of romance and interest on which he dwelt with far more delight, than he had ever yet derived from the realities of life. These pleasures were greatly enhanced by the nature of his rambles. Among the sublime regions which he trod, his spirit was fed by all those mysterious emotions, which the solitary contemplation of nature seldom fails to excite.

Thus did Eustace while away his time, in the contemplation of the mazy webs his fancy wove ; such was his principal occupation when childhood and boyhood had passed away, and manhood was fast approaching. When he was about sixteen, a friend of Lord Llarnarmon, passing through Lausanne, came to see him ; and this gentleman on his return to England ventured to point out to the father of the boy, the unfairness of leaving him there, without bringing him into an active sphere of life, and affording him the common advantages of his station. Soon after this hint, Lord Llarnarmon wrote to M. De la Broche, that he had some intention of procuring a commission in the army for Eustace, and thought it necessary to inquire into the present state of his health, which had been so sickly in his childhood, previously to making any definite arrangement with regard to him.

The kind old Frenchman heartily commiserated the dismay with which this letter filled poor Eustace ; but before he could dispatch the expository reply which he meditated, he was seized

with a sudden illness, of which he expired in a few days. Such was the nervous horror with which Eustace still regarded the home of his childhood, that he summoned up resolution sufficient to write to his father on this event, entreating permission to prolong his stay on the continent, and extend his survey of it, at least while he was undetermined as to what his future career should be. He also ventured to urge a request that he would not be precipitate in selecting the military profession for one whom feeble health and secluded habits rendered so peculiarly unfitted for it.

To this letter, Eustace obtained no answer ; but at the end of the half year which was at hand, on applying to his father's banker for the customary remittance of his allowance, he received the information that Lord Llarnarmon had given directions for it to be paid as usual ; and a message that, wherever he went, he was to leave information as to the means of communicating with him at the bank. Lord Llarnarmon, though he did not condescend to take any notice of his son's request, had complied with it without reluctance ; for being at that time in need of ready money, and his eldest son having run into much extravagance at college, he was willing rather to leave Eustace to himself, with the small allowance he had hitherto given him, than by recalling him home, to incur any immediate expense in consequence of the measure.

Two years had now elapsed since this tacit permission had been given, and during that period

Messrs. Millingham and Co. had been troubled by no inquiries, either from father or son ; nothing had been required from them but the transmission of one letter committed to their charge by Mordaunt, Eustace's early friend, who was now entering into the Church.

CHAPTER II.

Dost thou spurn the humble vale?
Life's proud summits wouldest thou scale?
Check thy climbing step elate,
Evils lurk in felon wait;
Dangers, eagle pinioned, bold,
Soar around each cliffy hold,
While cheerful peace, with linnet song
Chants the lowly dells among.

BURNS.

ACCORDINGLY, Lord Llarnarmon's first act was to inquire where his son was at present to be found; and on learning from his banker, that his last remittance had been made as usual to Lausanne, he without loss of time dispatched thither a confidential servant, who was less ignorant of his real intentions and secret designs, than any other person connected with him. One of the projects most dearly cherished by Lord Llarnarmon, and frustrated by his son's death, was the union of Vincent to the sister of a man whose character and interest stood so high in the esteem of the political party to which Lord Llarnarmon had allied himself, as to render so intimate a connection with him an object well worthy of his ambition. But great as was Lord Sanville's power and influence, his private

fortune was very inadequate to his many calls on it; he was therefore constrained to leave his sister destitute of any sufficient provision, and almost dependent on their mother, who found in the narrowness of her jointure a ceaseless subject of complaint and lamentation. The negociation which was entered into by the heads of the families, was therefore equally pleasing to each; and received the unhesitating acquiescence of the two persons it most nearly concerned. Mr. De Glynne was very willing that his father should be at the sole pains of transacting such an affair for him, and the proposal suited well the ambitious character of the Lady Theodora Vallenden. Lord Llarnarmon was never known to abandon a project once formed; and in reply to the very letter of condolence which he received from his friend, Lord Sanville, he wrote another in which he suggested, that Llarnarmon was not without an heir, and expressed a wish (almost pathetically) that all might remain on the same footing between the two families.

But how had Eustace, once so insignificant, now of so much importance, employed the uncontrolled independence of which his father's neglect or forgetfulness, had given him possession? In spite of weakness and indecision, Eustace was not without high aspirations; he cherished vague ideas of a time to come when he should

Scorn repose, and live laborious days,
conquer even that timidity which enslaved him, and

emerge from obscurity, prepared to play a hero's part. He dreamt dreams of ambition, which he had not vigour enough to attempt to realise, and formed plans of action which he was too infirm of purpose to execute.

At length, in some measure arousing himself from this moody idleness, he resolved to pass the remaining part of the first summer, after the death of his old preceptor, in visiting those parts of Switzerland which were least commonly explored ; and then passing over into Italy, from thence to write to his father, in order to ascertain his future fortunes.

In one of these mountain excursions, in which the fresh beauties of nature afforded him unmitigated pleasure, and really solaced his uneasy mind, Eustace met with an accident which would probably have cost him his life, had not the timely interposition of a friendly hand rescued him from danger when he was no longer able to assist himself. He had in his walk been tempted to quit the beaten track, in hopes to trace to its source a brightly sparkling streamlet which had all the day enchanted him by the gambols it had played in its devious course. As new beauties opened on his eyes with every onward step, he congratulated himself on having fallen on such a path, and, though evening was approaching, felt an irresistible impulse to continue to toil upwards, hoping to be rewarded by a glorious prospect of the departing orb of day from the height which he aspired to mount.

But now he found that the difficulties of the way were becoming almost insurmountable, and as fatigue began to damp the ardour with which he encountered them at first, he paused, and leaning on his Alpenstock, looked around to discover some easier mode of accomplishing his design. While so doing, he had but carelessly planted the staff on which he leant; the turf into which he had struck it gave way; it glanced off the smooth surface of a rock which was only thinly covered with verdure, and Eustace was precipitated with violence to the ground. The bushes against which he fell offered but a feeble resistance, and he continued to make a rapid descent of many yards among rocks and briars. With a desperate struggle (for it was for life) he caught with his outstretched arm the stem of a young tree, strong enough to yield him support, and to check his fall so as to enable him to regain his footing, but at the same time so pliant, that it bent with his weight, and dragging his arm over the rough stones that lay about its roots, lacerated the flesh in a most painful manner. Stunned and bruised as he was, and smarting with the pain of his wound, it was some minutes before he was fully alive to the hopelessness of his condition. Without any staff or prop, for his Alpenstock had fallen far beyond his reach, scarcely able to stand, as he found himself on first attempting to do so, and yet on a spot that it might have baffled the dexterity of the most active chamois hunter to scale, Eustace felt unable to assist him-

self, and also believed that he was quite out of the reach of aid. Under this terrible impression, he sank again upon the ground, and covering his face with his hands, strove to collect his senses and prepare to die.

At that moment he heard a human voice, nor was it very remote. Nerved by despair, he uttered a loud and piercing shout, and it was answered. After the lapse of a few moments, he was able to descry the figure of a man habited as a huntsman, descending warily and slowly to the ground he occupied. His deliverer, who was young and robust, approached him with a kind and cheerful mien, and addressing him in the Swiss French (with which Eustace was of course perfectly conversant) assisted him to rise, and grasping one of his hands powerfully, conducted him onward over heights which rendered his head dizzy, and made his heart sicken, though perhaps the stupor occasioned by his late shock rendered him less susceptible to fear than he would have been otherwise, for he was scarcely alive to his danger. Following his brave and hardy guide implicitly, they exchanged no words until they had descended from their perilous position, when the young mountaineer bid him place himself on the emerald bank of turf that they had reached, and quaff from his hunting-flask a draught that revived his nearly exhausted vigour. With fresh water from the stream that was here flowing tranquilly beside them, he bathed his

bruised and swollen arm, and taking a scarf from round his waist, made him wear it as a sling. After all these kind exertions in his behalf, he addressed him in a tone at once frank and tender, saying :

“ Now, Monsieur, do you find yourself better able to proceed ? If so, I will conduct you to the house of our good pastor, where I promise you that you shall pass the night with comfort ; and to-morrow I hope we shall find you little the worse for your downfall on our mountain to-day.”

“ And does your pastor then willingly bestow his hospitality on every wandering stranger ?”

“ Most willingly. He is indeed an excellent man, and besides that, he loves to show compassion and to render services. I think he delights in the face of a stranger ; a very rare sight here, I assure you.”

“ Is he an old man ?”

“ Very old ; but still in as complete possession of his faculties as in his greenest years. He did not always live amongst us ; he went away even so far as Paris, I believe ; certainly beyond Geneva, and from thence he has brought away such learning as can never find its match here. This perhaps is one reason why strangers, especially foreigners, are so welcome to him ; for he has no companions, scarcely any pupils, though even those would satisfy him, I believe ; and indeed if he did not insist on Mademoiselle Claudine learning with

him in all the great books he studies, I think he would seldom speak from one year's end to another."

"Indeed; and who is Mademoiselle Claudine? His sister?"

"No," replied his communicative friend, with a hearty laugh, "no, indeed. She is his grand-child. Poor old man, how he dotes upon her! Once, not long after he first came hither, he had a letter, (he never has any now), and we think it told him that his child was dead, for his heart seemed well nigh broken; his hair was not white then as it is now, and though he loved his books, yet he loved a merry jest, and a social circle also. Well, he set out, and we did not see him again for a month. When he returned to us, his mourning habit could not tell us more plainly that he had known sorrow than did his pale mild face, and his altered voice. He brought with him a child so lovely as to win the hearts of all who saw her, and she seemed the only solace our dear old pastor now possessed. But we are come in sight of M. Chénier's house, and I will run on rather faster than you may be inclined to follow, to give him notice of our approach."

So saying, he hurried on, leaving poor Eustace, bruised and smarting as he was, heartily rejoiced at the happy prospect of a termination to the labour and danger of the day.

Before he could reach the house, he perceived his friendly guide returning towards him, followed by -

an old man, apparently feeble and infirm ; but no sooner did he arrive near enough for him to scan his countenance, than he perceived that the fire of his dark eye was yet unquenched, and that the lines on his brow seemed rather the furrows of deep thought and past sorrows, than the wrinkles of time alone. His voice too, which he raised to welcome him, was still clear and unbroken, and the cordiality, with which he received him, possessed all the charm of the most refined good breeding. Touched by compassion, which Eustace was a fit object to inspire, the worthy man hastened to welcome him to his roof, and to prepare for him every accommodation which it afforded.

In this task he was assisted by a young and very lovely girl, in whom Eustace discovered Claudine. Never before had he beheld such angelic beauty as then he gazed on. Ill at ease as he was, worn and weary, and conscious that he himself was not in a plight to charm the eyes of any beholder, he could not turn his looks from her, nor even attend to the friendly observations of his host, nor partake with any appetite of the plentiful repast which his sylph-like attendant hastened to provide with a promptitude that waited not to be bidden.

Having completed the preparations for their evening meal, she and her grandfather, and the honest guide who had conducted Eustace thither, approached to partake of it, and the evening closed with pious prayer and praise offered up

by Chénier in a voice so fervent and so solemn, as to leave Eustace greatly impressed with the sublimity of a scene in which Claudine seemed the presiding angel. Above all was he touched by a brief and simple thanksgiving for his own delivery from imminent peril, introduced by the venerable pastor, and heartily responded to by his auditors.

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CHAPTER III.

La violetta
Che nell' erbetta
S'apre al matin novella,
Di', non è cosa
Tutta odorosa,
Tutta leggiadra e bella ?

CHIABRERA.

Her beauty is exquisite ; her favour infinite :
Her love sincere, her thoughts immaculate ;
Her tears pure messengers sent from her heart ;
Her heart as far from fraud as heaven from earth.

TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA.

EVEN when retired to the small and cleanly chamber to which his host conducted him, Eustace, though greatly wearied, could not banish from his mind the events of the day. No sooner did sleep promise to soothe his excited spirits, than some wild vision would cause him to dart from his slumbers. Sometimes he trod the brink of precipices more appalling than those from which he had been snatched ; sometimes Claudine was his guardian angel, and rendered him services a thousand times more perilous than those he had received at the hands of Louis. Fatigue, however, at length banished these visions, and he fell into a heavy slumber from which he sprang up refreshed, when

the beams of the rising sun forced their way through his casement, which looked forth on the smiling garden that surrounded the house.

The first sight that greeted his eyes, was the form of Claudine at a little distance. She seemed busily engaged, gathering fruit and flowers; and Eustace was more than ever struck with her peculiar beauty. Never did poet or painter so portray the ideal charms of Aurora, as to embody her beauty to those who heard or viewed the produce of their imagination half so vividly as did the glowing radiant loveliness of this young girl. On her countenance '*il lampeggiar dell' angelico riso*,' was the most enchanting beam of happiness that mortal countenance ever reflected; such a smile as might have rested on a cherub's face, when contemplating the bliss of Paradise! Her luxuriant hair fell in a profusion of waving tresses on her neck and shoulders, and was of a rich brown colour, burnished and glittering, as if a fine gold dust had been sprinkled over it. Around her mouth was diffused a bland expression, bespeaking the tenderest sensibility, and the most infantine guilelessness. Peace was enthroned on her broad smooth brow; and Eve, before the fall, without the taint of sin or sorrow, must have looked like her, when Adam woke and loved her! So thought Eustace, while he gazed forth on her unconscious beauty.

Monsieur Chénier, his hospitable host, though he confessed that Eustace was greatly restored in ap-

pearance by his night's rest, would not for a moment permit him to propose quitting his roof so speedily. In fact, the presence of the few stray guests, who chanced to cross his threshold, was, (as Louis had said) far too acceptable for him, to find him ready soon to relinquish their society. Eustace quickly perceived that he was a man whose favourite pursuit and pleasure was literature. His acquirements, particularly his classical erudition, were great, and of course quite unparalleled in the humble sphere in which he moved. Indeed, his whole demeanour strongly recalled to Eustace's mind, the character depicted by Sir Thomas More in these words: 'In his face did shine such an amiable reverence as was pleasant to behold. Gentle in communication, yet earnest and sage;' in his speech he was fine, eloquent, and pithy. The mild and benevolent expression of his countenance seemed to say that all his natural sagacity had not been employed in the acquisition of worldly knowledge, nor sharpened by the study of his fellow-men in the busy haunts of life; but, passing his days in meditative retirement, almost in solitude, he had talked much with God and nature, and little with the perverted sons of men. Chénier had indeed 'been tumbled and tossed in the waves of divers misfortunes and adversities, and had learned the experience of the world, which being so learned, cannot easily be forgotten.' But from the indulgence of his simple, peaceful tastes, and from the ardent affection subsisting between himself and his grandchild, he had derived as much

happiness as often falls to the share of mortals. One of the greatest of those casual pleasures which come to cheer us all at intervals, (though it must needs be confessed that to some they come but seldom) was intercourse with men capable of entering into his favourite pursuits; and the gratitude which his hospitality seldom failed to excite in those, towards whom it was exercised, often induced them to offer to his acceptance some of the precious volumes which had formed, perhaps, the subject of their conversations, and to place in his possession works too modern otherwise to have reached his library. Delighted to find that Eustace's acquirements in some respects even rivalled his own, he naturally strove to detain him; and during the few days he spent with them, it was equally natural that the charms of a handsome person, the peculiar gentleness of his voice and manner, the intelligence of his countenance, the enthusiastic spirit of romance, that imbued all his conversation, should render him singularly fascinating to the young and inexperienced Claudine, and induce her inwardly to believe that she 'might call him a thing divine, for nothing natural she ever saw so noble.'

Another, perhaps, even more powerful instrument of interest with Claudine, was the profound melancholy that seemed to overshadow him, betraying, (at least, so Claudine read it) the existence of some secret grief 'stealing the brightness of his life away.' Here she felt that her sympathy

might be valuable, though her inferiority of intellect might render her incapable of sharing all his thoughts ; she could surely share his sorrows !

Eustace left them, with often repeated promises of a speedy return. All their former pleasures seemed to languish during his absence. Chénier's studies were pursued with less zest ; Claudine was no longer the happy Claudine the stranger had found her. Those two days seemed rather years in the influence they had exerted on her character ; her heart was changed, and for her the enjoyment of the careless felicity of childhood was for ever at an end. Now it was that Claudine first *felt* that she was motherless. In vain she sought, half self-reproachfully and half in dread, to find an explanation of this strange revolution in all her feelings. She was baffled by her own heart : the simple prayers that she had been accustomed to repeat from her infancy, no longer seemed to speak all its wants. She sank despondently on her knees, and with a gush of tears added an earnest supplication that the lot of the stranger might be happy ; that blessings might ever be showered on him, and that, though perhaps she might never see him more, he might sometimes in the midst of them think upon her. Somewhat soothed by having thus given vent to her feelings, she strove to resume her customary placidity, and to return to her usual occupations.

CHAPTER IV.

I leave myself, my friends, and all, for love.

Those hast metamorphosed me ;
Made me neglect my studies, lose my time,
War with good counsel, set the world at nought.

TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA.

Sure the last end

Of the good man is Peace ! How calm his exit !
Night dews fall not more gently to the ground,
Nor weary, worn out winds expire so soft.
By unperceived degrees he wears away.

BLAIR'S GRAVE.

EUSTACE returned speedily, and from that day his visits were frequent. In a very short time he became an inmate of the house, and sending for his books from Lausanne, incorporated them in Chénier's library. Claudine, whose assiduity as a pupil had chiefly been exercised to gratify her grandfather, now quietly ceded her place to one so well qualified to fill it. Not that she forsook their society, nor sought for livelier occupations to replace those she relinquished ; she was well content to sit beside them, looking from the face of one to that of the other, with a timid, tender gaze, that seemed to say, that there she was happy, because there was all she loved. Whatever were the words that fell from their lips, they were to her most

musical; whatever the subject that engrossed their thoughts, to her it was invested with interest. The gentleness of her nature did not weaken the intensity of her feelings; and the delicate fragility of her form clearly showed how little able she would be to contend with sorrow or neglect. She had ever been *l'enfant chérie* of Chénier's heart, and it was necessary to her existence to be so.

Claudine quickly grew to love Eustace. He was to her all that Ferdinand was to Miranda; and though Eustace met with none of the affected churlishness of Prospero, he needed no further stimulus to love than he derived from her exceeding beauty, and tenderness, and grace. If difficulties increase love, sufficient existed here to do so, though they sprang not from Chénier nor Claudine. Awed as he was by his knowledge of his father, Eustace was at a loss how to proceed. To write to him an account of the deep and earnest feelings excited in his breast by this lovely child of nature, he deemed absolute madness; and yet, when he dwelt on the indifference and total neglect which he had so long experienced, he imagined that any decision he could make with regard to himself, would excite too little interest to call forth opposition.

Wavering as these fluctuations of thought had made him, from the time of the visit to Chénier's abode, Eustace, though scarcely with a definite motive for such a proceeding, had avoided giving his real name of De Glynne to his newly-made

friend, and had even employed that of Fenton, which his mother had borne, and himself also.

One evening while he was fondly and vainly musing on his hopeless passion, a plan suggested itself to him, which he determined to adopt. He would write to Mordaunt, a friend from whom he had always received the most sincere advice, and appealing to him would entreat his mediation with Lord Llarnarmon, if he thought it would be availing. A vague idea floated across his mind that, for Claudine's sake, and for the continuance of a life of so much happiness—for

Innocence, with angel smile,
Simplicity that knows no guile,
And love and peace were there—

if he received a reply unfavourable to his hopes from Mordaunt, he would, without revealing any of his proceedings to his father, espouse her under the name which he rejoiced in having assumed, and allow the place of his residence and every circumstance of his existence to remain utterly unknown to all his neglectful relations, nor ever emerge from his chosen obscurity, unless called on most imperatively to do so by some unforeseen occurrence. Deriving more satisfaction from this idea than he had known since he had first seen Claudine, he immediately dispatched the letter to Mordaunt. Having done this, he seemed to forget that he had ever designed to await its results; and before any answer *could* arrive, he had told Claudine that he loved her; he had learned that her heart was wholly

his ; he had been clasped to Chénier's bosom in a fond, parental embrace ; and that night at supper the happy old man opened a Virgil, finer than any he had ever before possessed, which was among the books presented to him by Eustace, and turning to the pathetic speech in which the venerable Latinus declares his belief that the Gods had ever designed his fair child for Æneas, the illustrious stranger, and for none other, read the passage aloud to Eustace, ending it by saying :

“And now the fair Lavinia is yours ; but there is here no Turnus to be conquered.”

Eustace thought at that moment, that in the gloom that overcast the usually frank and open brow of Louis (who had shared their repast) he read the secret of a rival ; and he rejoiced that he had snatched his beautiful betrothed from a lot he deemed so unworthy of her.

Before long, Mordaunt's reply arrived ; and from its inauspicious tone, Eustace again applauded himself for the caution that had prevented the disclosure of his real name and position from Chénier ; and the following day saw him the joyful bridegroom of the beautiful Claudine.

Months passed on, and Eustace had passed them in happiness and rejoicing ; but was he so happy and so rejoicing as when first he executed his hastily conceived plan ? Was it ‘so sweet now as it was before ?’ No ; a sense of weariness was gradually creeping over him, not defined, not acknowledged ; but nevertheless time was

* strengthening it: unavailing regret, weak repining, were ready to betray themselves, but for one check that awed them into silence. Unsuspicious and 'unteachable in worldly things' as was Claude Chénier, his character was marked by a placid dignity and unswerving rectitude, and a calm, unerring sense of what was due to himself and to others, that inspired a respect too much tempered by love to degenerate into fear in all around him. Over the mind of Eustace he possessed almost unconsciously somewhat of the same influence as that exercised by his father; a power of bringing him into subjection by his superior strength of mind; so that, while he lived, Claudine's interests were secure.

Inconstancy was a feature in Eustace's character. When first he saw Claudine she awakened the most passionate love; her extreme loveliness, her infantine simplicity and grace, touched his heart irresistibly. Yielding to these charms, all other considerations had been without weight; but ever unable to cast off the early yoke imposed on his childhood, a dread of his father's stern authority, though prepared to despise the manifest evils of his course in forming this obscure alliance, he could not prepare himself to brave resentment; and it was only the security of secrecy that emboldened him to carry into effect a project he had not strength of mind either to relinquish or avow. Claudine, in truth, was totally unfitted by nature and education to be his wife. Her mind and temper were equally

unsuited to assimilate with his. In the first, almost a child in years and knowledge, she was without doubt painfully his inferior ; with respect to the second, her very mildness and docility incapacitated her from exercising the slightest influence over, or at any time directing the actions of her weak and vacillating companion. She was indeed beautiful in truth, and tenderness, and purity, and

All with which nature halloweth her daughters ;

she should have fallen to the share of one who would have guarded her with manly firmness as a pearl of great price.

We have said that even when Eustace first knew Chénier he found him an old infirm man ; the unusual severity of the following winter told greatly in him, and it appeared to all that his enfeebled frame had but little more life in it. He often said that he had accomplished the only object for which he had desired a prolongation of life, on that day which gave Claudine to one who would love and cherish her. He had been unwilling to die, he had resisted death, while she was unprotected. Having completed his task, he was now evidently sinking fast ; his decline was cheered by the constant society and affectionate care of his two children (as he loved to call them) ; and if the attentions of Eustace chiefly sprang from feelings of compassion and respect, those of Claudine were the spontaneous effusions of love.

One spring day, one of the loveliest that had

yet given promise of a returning summer, the old man seemed to rally a little ; but he well knew how deceitful were any presages of reviving health. Eustace had gone up into the mountains, and Claudine, alone with her grandfather, listened to the last solemn words of a departing spirit. She wept while she listened, yet not altogether sadly ; for she knew that time hung heavily on the hands of one who was seeking eternity ; but though she mourned not for him, she felt a strange sense of loneliness and of depression, as she contemplated the nearness of his departure. She felt this in spite of her husband's love, and all the blessed hopes of maternity which now she cherished. Intending to banish the melancholy which he had caused, the old man bid her lead him once again to his library table, and place before him the only book he had of late studied, and then to go to meet Eustace, as the hour of his return was nigh. In obedience to his wishes she left him, and began to ascend the mountain path in which she expected to find Eustace. The pure breeze seemed to convey joy on its wing ; it dried her tears as it fanned her cheek, and she thanked Heaven with a rejoicing spirit, that even though her grandfather must leave her, still she should not be alone.

Eustace at that moment reached her, and with grateful love she cast herself into his arms, and together they began to retrace their steps to the cottage. As they entered the house, a paleness suddenly overspread Claudine's cheek, banishing

the glow of health, and a tremor passed over her frame, as she entered the little library of her father, in which an unnatural stillness seemed to reign.

*Une tristesse vague, une ombre de malheur,
Comme un frisson sur l'eau, courut sur tout son cœur.**

Clinging to Eustace, she knew not why, she advanced towards the old man ; he had bent forward till his head reposed upon the open page, and his arms hung listlessly beside him ; his eyes were closed, and on his parted lips was a tranquil smile that seemed to say his dreams were happy ; but when they gazed upon the colourless cheek, and marked the total cessation of respiration, and saw that no movement followed though they called him by his name, they knew that he was dead !

Alas ! poor Claudine !

* Lamartine.

CHAPTER V.

Candida rosa nata fra dure spine.

PETRARCA.

So young ! so fair !
But now a bride and mother ! and now there.
While thy heart still bled,
The mother of a moment, o'er thy boy,
Death hushed that pang for ever !

BYRON.

EUSTACE was sincerely touched by Claudine's deep affliction, and the sympathy which the sight of grief naturally awakens in the human heart, revived much of his first affection ; but this was but a hasty spark, and 'straight was cold again.' His mode of existence daily grew more wearisome to him ; he often sat in moody silence, turning over in his mind all possible means of emerging from the obscurity into which he had voluntarily plunged himself, and returning to his native country. Time having ripened his abilities, these thoughts daily acquired more weight with him ; he began to muse on the possibility of disclosing his real situation to his father, and seeking his forgiveness ; but he was still withheld from this attempt by fear, and whenever he turned to Mordaunt's letter, he saw that that sincere friend spoke in the most undoubting

terms of the opposition his wishes would encounter, and deprived him of the hope that his insignificance would cause his actions to be viewed with indifference.

Claudine long remained wholly unconscious of her husband's increasing dissatisfaction. When she marked his abstracted air, and the listless unconcern with which he regarded all the petty transactions of their daily life, she was grieved to think that she could so ill supply the loss of so intellectual a companion as him who was gone, and by a thousand little efforts would strive to win him to cheerfulness. One evening when he was lost in moody contemplation, his eye vacantly fixed on the fair landscape before him, evidently deriving no pleasure from the view, though he gazed on 'a scene for love and solitude designed,'

All up the craggy cliffs that towered to Heaven,
Green waved the murmuring pines on every side,
Save where fair opening to the beam of even
A dale sloped gradual to the valley wide.

She silently stole behind him, and with the tears in her soft eyes bent over him, and pressing her cheek to his, whispered :

"Dearest Eustace, is it not well for him to be away? Old, sick, and feeble as he was, and often, in spite of his love for us, thinking of those who were gone, will it not be better, far better for us to go to him, than for him to have lingered with us? But you grieve here," she said, "I know that you do, and although I cling to this place still,

saddened as it is, I would fain urge you to go from it, and seek some other in which you may find fresh interests and newer occupations, and above all, companions worthy of you."

"How is this possible!" exclaimed Eustace, with fretful impatience.

"Why not?" replied Claudine, gently. "Surely it were very easy. Let us go into sunny Italy. How often have you talked of your desire to see her matchless works of art, her noble cities, her unrivalled wonders of the past! Let us quit our mountains, our 'palaces of nature,' and seek those others, which are ennobled by all that Nature's most gifted sons could produce."

Eustace listened to her words with an irritated air; he knew that what she suggested was rendered impracticable by his secret tie to her, and that he could not venture to emerge from his retirement unless he was willing to risk discovery, and prepared to make an avowal of his situation. Claudine was unable to read the workings of her husband's mind. She and her grandfather had always perceived that some hidden cause existed, that rendered him entirely indisposed to return to his native country; and so averse was he to speak of it, or in any way to describe his former situation when there, or any particulars of his early life, that by a kind of tacit agreement, these subjects were never entered upon in their conversations. Claudine had been induced to mention Italy, in consequence of the enthusiastic ardour with which Eus-

tace studied the poetry of that country ; the reverence with which he and Chénier had always dwelt on its records of old, and every thing connected with its former mighty sovereigns ; and the fervent desire Eustace had often expressed to visit its classic remains. And here she was indeed at a loss as to the cause that appeared to render this scheme also impracticable. That Eustace had ceased to be happy she was convinced, and this conviction preyed upon her spirits, and robbed her of all her vivacity. Endowed naturally with the most acute sensibility, and never innured to suffering, she felt any disappointment or affliction far more severely than those in the habitual endurance of many evils. She had in this entire seclusion no means of escape, no means of turning her mind away from harassing thoughts ; and the result of her painful meditations was a belief that she shackled her husband's movements, and was an obstacle in his path. That such was the feeling of his mind she became daily more assured from the unceasing observance of every look and every word ; and the sadness engendered by this idea rendered her daily less able to cheer his solitude. Eustace on the other hand, conscious that he was inflicting on her sufferings the most undeserved, and tormented by an upbraiding spirit, seemed likely to become daily more fretful, and even morose.

Such was the state of things when Eustace received a summons from Lausanne, acquainting him that a person declaring himself dispatched by his

father, Lord Llarnarmon, had arrived there, and was making earnest inquiries concerning him. The Swiss with whom Eustace had lodged after the death of De la Broche, was stubborn and faithful to his trust, and strictly obeying his master's injunctions to give no clue to his present residence without his command, always forwarded to him any necessary communications. Eustace, ignorant what the message from his father might portend, was full of anxiety to see the bearer of it, and after a brief consideration, resolved to depart immediately to Lausanne, without communicating either hopes or fears to Claudine until he had ascertained which were just. The motive of this determination was kind and affectionate; he had remarked only the preceding day how greatly Claudine was changed since her grandfather's death; he had observed the paleness of her cheek, and the extreme languor of her air, while a feeling of compunction mingled with his alarm.

Change of scene, change of air, any change he thought would be equally advantageous to them both; and he resolved that, as soon as possible after the birth of their child, which was now daily expected, he would make some efforts to decide their future destinies. At such a moment it was not without a severe pang, and the revival of all his early fondness, that he could abandon Claudine's side; yet such were the awe and terror that the name of his father still retained the power of inspiring, that he did not venture to hesitate in

complying with the summons he had received. Accordingly after a brief and agitated leave taking, in which he alleged that he was called on by a friend to hear important communications from England, he departed. The unhappy Claudine, believing in the necessity of her husband's departure, carefully concealed from him the anguish which it caused her; but when he was gone, and could no longer behold her, she sank down in hopeless, helpless agony.

Even to herself, such grief appeared irrational. Eustace could scarcely be absent for many days; and she remembered how often of late she had ardently desired that any diversion might occur that would break in upon, and relieve the monotonous routine of his life. With this idea she strove to master her emotion, and to await his return with calmness. She also strove to arm herself with fortitude to meet the hour of danger, should it arrive during his absence; though the bare suspicion that it might do so caused her heart to sink within her.

"Good Heaven!" said the fair young creature, casting herself on the ground, and raising her eyes and hands in supplication, "if it should terminate fatally—if I should have looked on him for the last time, and die without him! I have so many things to say to him—so much to entreat of him! I would bid him not grieve for me, for in me he did not find his happiness. I would also bid him to cherish our child, and if he go forth into the world

again, (as he will,) sometimes, not when he is gay and happy, but when misfortunes come, and my grandfather used to say that they do come to all; in lonely hours when it would cheer him to see a pitying face at his side, to remember his Claudine. Perhaps I may be near him, and he not know it. Perhaps, oh! my grandfather, you are near me now!"

And the poor girl wept at her own fond images.

Claudine was not left long to absolute solitude; for no sooner was it known that Eustace had quitted her, than Marguerite (the mother of Louis) who loved her as if she had been her own child, feeling very indignant and even suspicious at this sudden departure of the stranger at such a time, came up to their little home and insisted on remaining with her till her husband's return. Her presence was indeed very acceptable to Claudine, who had all her life been used to the good woman.

Marguerite, previously to her arrival, had firmly resolved that whatever suspicions had arisen in her own mind on Eustace's disappearance, she would carefully conceal them from Claudine; and if any similar ones had occurred to her, she would endeavour to seem to hold them lightly. But, alas! not many hours had elapsed before these wise precautions were all forgotten, and she had allowed herself to pour forth all her angry doubts, and to detail every circumstance that tended to strengthen her opinion. Claudine listened so silently, with so much calmness or rather stillness to her words,

that Marguerite did not see the effect they produced. The iron entered her soul, but her grief was not loud—she only turned her face to the wall and wept, and that so silently, that her loquacious attendant discovered not her emotion. At length she asked Claudine if she would not rise, and she faintly replied, that she thought she was too ill; Marguerite undrew the curtains of the window, and gazed anxiously in her face. She looked so pale, so sad, so very wan, that poor Marguerite, first coming to a sense of the mischief she had been working, seated herself on the bed, and taking her white and trembling hand between her own rough ones, burst into tears:

“*Ma mère*,” for so she almost always called her, “*ma pauvre mère*, why do you grieve?” said Claudine in a sweet, low voice, “do you not see plainly that I am going to my grandfather? I know that I am, and I know that he will welcome me gladly.”

Marguerite only sobbed more violently at these words; and Claudine, raising herself languidly, added with great earnestness:

“Being me some paper and a pen; I *must* write something, something for you to give Eustace, if I never see him again.”

Her lip quivered as she spoke, and a look of inexpressible anguish passed over her face; then she continued:

“I know he will come again, but *I* shall not see him.” She paused awhile; then she exclaimed:

“ Oh ! *ma mère*, I am young to die ! He did not think I should go so soon. If I had lived another month, mother, I should be seventeen.”

Poor Marguerite, now in utter despair, sought with the greatest vehemence to banish this melancholy presentiment ; but Claudine only listened in silence, and then reiterated her request for materials for writing to Eustace. Always accustomed to comply with everything she required, Marguerite could only obey. After writing for a short time, Claudine sank back on her pillow, faint and exhausted ; again she made an effort, and after adding a few words, again she desisted, and placing the sheet of paper under her pillow, she laid her head upon it. The setting sun was going down in all its glory, shedding on the snowy mountain tops that roseate hue of such wonderful loveliness, peculiar to her native land. This fair spectacle Claudine surveyed from the window that was opposite to her bed. She gazed forth long and intensely, and then sank back with a profound sigh.

Before morning, the low wailing of a new-born infant was heard in the home of Eustace, but the fair young mother lay there a lifeless corpse.

CHAPTER VI.

In the sweetest bud
'The eating canker dwells.

SHAKSPEARE.

Yet can I not persuade me thou art dead,
Or that thy corse corrupts in earth's dark womb ;
Or that thy beauties lie in wormy bed,
Hid from the world in a low, delved tomb.

MILTON.

WHEN Eustace arrived at Lausanne, he found that the messenger dispatched by his father was a confidential servant, living with him at the time when he first quitted the paternal roof. This man, Grierson, bore the tidings which have already been made known to the reader, of his brother Vincent's death. He brought also an arbitrary command to Eustace to return to England without the smallest delay. To comply with this was impossible ; to quit Switzerland without returning to Claudine, and without making a provision for her during his absence, was not for a moment dreamt of by Eustace. Grierson, who had more acuteness than was requisite to read the character of the youth he had to deal with, easily perceived his consternation, and guessed that some important cause must exist to render unwelcome a command which augured so favourable a change in the circumstances of him

on whom it was laid. He immediately resolved to obtain possession of this secret, as he thought he could not fail to turn to account knowledge which Lord Llarnarmon would desire undoubtedly to obtain, and which would probably place the young heir in some degree in his power. His first expedient was to avail himself of the dread with which Eustace so evidently regarded his father, and therefore he listened with an air of ominous gravity to De Glynne, who, with some agitation, began to inform him of the utter impracticability of departing for England with him, and ventured to add with an assumption of authority, that he must forthwith return to Lord Llarnarmon, and assure him of his intention to obey his injunctions, as soon as he could terminate the few arrangements necessary to be made before quitting a place so long his residence. Grierson listened to this speech with immovable coolness; he then replied that the sole directions he had received were not to return without Mr. De Glynne; disobedience to these orders would certainly expose him to Lord Llarnarmon's displeasure; while any sign of manifest reluctance to return to the paternal roof at such a time would probably exasperate him irremediably with Eustace, whom he said he supposed to be sufficiently acquainted with his father's character to judge of the truth and likelihood of what he averred. De Glynne listened with a kind of frantic despair; to start at once for England was impossible; to be perpetually watched by this man was fatal to all

his schemes ; yet, if he persisted in refusing to depart without him, such would of course be his system. Reduced to a state of desperation, he thought of trying to win the man over to his interest by revealing his real situation to him ; thus he would gain the time and freedom of action so indispensable to him, and he could afterwards seek by any available means to bind him over to secrecy. This line of conduct he therefore pursued ; he informed Grierson of every circumstance, and told him of his immovable resolution to return immediately to Claudine.

Grierson listened to this extraordinary disclosure with astonishment and dismay, not quite unmixed with pity ; for he saw plainly that, with regard to his father, Eustace's worst apprehensions would not fail to be realised. He himself almost shrank from the contemplation of Lord Llarnarmon's rage, when he should find his ambitious schemes overthrown by one whom he had sought only as an obedient tool.

Grierson was a bold, determined man, but had always lived in a subjection to his lord like that of a vassal of old ; the one thing he did not *dare* to do, was to encounter, still less provoke his wrath. He saw, too, that if he could persuade the young heir to believe continuance of secrecy the only thing practicable, he might easily obtain an unbounded sway over him, from which he might eventually derive great profit. He accordingly commenced his proceedings by offering to write to

Lord Llarnarmon, merely stating that he had hopes of reaching Mr. De Glynne very shortly ; he then agreed to allow Eustace time to visit his home, but strongly counselled him not to think of conveying his young wife to England, but to leave her among her own people, until he should have established claims to consideration with his father, ascertained what were his views with regard to him, and discovered the most effectual means of conciliating his favour. In all these suggestions Eustace acquiesced ; for knowing Grierson's long and intimate knowledge of his father, he felt convinced that to none could he more effectually apply for directions in his conduct towards him.

When Eustace proceeded to prepare for his return home, he found that Grierson intended to accompany him ; he was little pleased with this design, but still he ventured on no objection, and they departed together. No sooner had they reached the well-known mountain path which led to his dwelling, than Eustace, springing from their rustic conveyance, told Grierson to follow him leisurely, and in a moment was out of sight. He had been absent now for five days, and he immediately perceived that some unwonted occurrence had taken place in his home. The little garden-gate had been lifted from its hinges, and cast aside on the ground ; the door of his house was open, but neither Claudine nor any one else was visible ; a mournful silence reigned around, and paralyzed by an indefinite feeling of fear,

he almost dreaded to see any one who could give a reply to the questions that trembled on his lips. At this moment, before he had summoned courage to enter, he discovered Marguerite advancing, accompanied by another woman of the village, whose occupation he well knew to be that of providing necessaries for the humble funerals of the little district. She carried in her hand a kind of white dress, it might be a shroud, and they both appeared to be approaching his cottage. At the unexpected sight of him they stopped short in utter consternation, while he, rushing wildly towards them, seized the weeping Marguerite by the arm, and commanded her to give him some tidings of his wife.

“Alas! alas! Monsieur,” sobbed she; “your child, you shall see your son.”

“My wife! my Claudine! do not dare to tell me that I shall not see her.”

Breaking from Marguerite he rushed distractedly into the house. He hastened on till he reached the pleasant chamber which he and Claudine had always occupied. The door was fastened, but with a violent effort he forced it open and entered.

On the couch before him lay his fair young wife. She was, according to the custom of her country, robed in white, and scattered around and over her were the fresh, sweet flowers of the season. He bent over her; pressed his lips to hers to feel if the breath of life still lingered there, and uttering a loud and frantic shriek, fell senseless beside her.

The poor, terrified women who had followed him were at a loss how to proceed, when the arrival of Grierson reduced their task to obedience. Learning from Marguerite, who was touched with compunction when she beheld Eustace's real grief, her willingness to afford him any aid in her power, he bore the still lifeless body of his young master to her cottage, and placed him in a bed. He then proceeded to inform himself of the state of things.

He found that the burial of Claudine was to take place the following morning, and that Marguerite had taken the unfortunate infant home, and tended it with the greatest care. Nevertheless it seemed but little likely to outlive its mother long, and she therefore had decided that the Curé who was to perform the burial service over Claudine, should also baptize her child. She had also determined, in the absence of Eustace, to give the babe the name borne by Claude Chénier, so loved and lamented by all his flock, rather than that of the stranger who was regarded with some suspicion and dislike.

The violent shock sustained by Eustace had shaken his very senses, and he only revived to utter the wildest ravings of delirium. All these arrangements therefore could only be submitted to Grierson, who, leaving the fulfilment of them to Marguerite, devoted himself with great assiduity to the care of his master; for he felt bound by duty to Lord Llarnarmon to exert himself to the utmost to save the life of his heir and sole remaining child.

Grierson, during the tedious illness which he had to watch, had time to dwell on the fact that by the sudden catastrophe of Claudine's death, the difficulties that had existed between the father and son were in a great measure at an end, and indeed if that of the child followed, would be wholly removed. In that case he would be deprived of the advantage and profit he had hoped to derive from the possession of so important a secret. This reflection filled him with a regret which he thought but reasonable, and the lively interest which it led him to manifest in the welfare of the child, made an impression greatly in his favour on Marguerite's tender heart, which was full of penitence for the injustice which she believed she had done to Eustace, and ill-disposed again to form hastily an injurious opinion of any one. Grierson resolved to proceed to England with Eustace as soon as he could remove him with safety ; but though very anxious to take him from a scene in which he did not design that he should act, he also desired to allow him a certain time for the recovery of composure before he reached his father. He determined to leave the infant Claude in the charge of Marguerite, informing her that important business exacted the presence of its parent in England, which would greatly affect its future interests ; and that she should hear from Mr. Fenton (as he still called him) his further wishes with regard to the child. He also gave her a sum of money of which to make use during

their absence. He then wrote to Lord Llarnarmon, informing him of Mr. De Glynne's alarming illness and still precarious state, and alleging as the primary cause of the attack, too great fatigue and cold. All these proceedings were acquiesced in by Eustace, as soon as he was able to listen to their detail; and in a kind of moody, silent despair, he watched without offering any resistance, the preparations made by Grierson for their departure.

His air of helpless melancholy filled Marguerite with compassion, and finding her way to him in private, she gave him the unfinished letter of Claudine which she had found beneath her pillow. With eager desire, yet not without trembling awe, Eustace proceeded to open it. The words were few and simple, but the image they presented of herself pierced him to the heart.

"Dear Eustace," she wrote, "I am dying. I know it well, though Marguerite does not tell me so; and when you return your heart will bleed when you find that you were not with me in my last hour. I used to think sometimes, when I contemplated the possibility of this event, that I would gladly expire on your bosom. But God does not will this!

"I had always an intention to write some few lines to leave behind me, and if I lived, to burn them. I wish to bid you not to grieve, dearest; you are not happy, and if I have been the obstacle to your happiness, the cause of the

uneasy repining I have so often read on your countenance, then do I thank God most heartily for vouchsafing to remove me; and may you be happier henceforth! This is a prayer that I have often offered up to Heaven, with supplications also that if it were possible for me to alleviate your sufferings, I might be directed how to do so.

“Our child, Eustace,—if our child live, surely you will cherish it. . .”

Here she had probably been too much overpowered to continue, for here she had stopped.

Claudine's last letter, a lock of her hair, and a picture of her that had been painted by an itinerant Italian artist, these were the only relics that Eustace bore away from the scene of his greatest bliss and of his deepest woe.

CHAPTER VII.

Thy neck is bended to the yoke !

SMOLLET.

What jarres, what cares, what toyle, what discontentments, and what unexpected distractions shall we light upon !

OWEN FELTHAM.

THE lapse of a few more weeks brought Eustace, in obedience to his father's mandate, back to his native land and to his paternal home, in some degree restored to health, but sunk into the most helpless despondency ; and where was he, in a situation where profound secrecy was all he had to trust to, to seek for consolation ?

Though the intercourse between him and his brother had been so small as really to leave them almost strangers to each other, yet the tenderness of his heart made Eustace regret that he had been so far distant, when an untimely death removed him for ever, and he looked forward to his first meeting with his father with apprehensive dread. ' He suffered with those he saw suffer.' The sensitiveness of his nature rendered the sight of suffering peculiarly painful to him, and his impulse was always to fly from it ; for he wanted that manly sensibility that inspires active zeal in the behalf of

misery which we should otherwise deplore in vain. He shrank from beholding the turbulence of grief which he thought must prevail in Lord Llarnarmon's bosom for the loss of the child he had loved. Little did he anticipate that the sight of his surviving son would impart any consolation to his troubled spirit, and with unmixed feelings of pain and repugnance at last entered his father's presence.

In both respects was he mistaken ; Lord Llarnarmon's grief, however deep it might be, did not rob him of composure, and his reception of Eustace was warmly affectionate. In fact, his heart had been filled with alarm and dismay by the tidings of Eustace's illness. He then seemed to discern the avenging arm of offended Heaven, outstretched to follow him down to his grave, prepared to heap punishment on punishment, about to strip him of every means of pursuing his ambitious ends, and of all the accumulated wordly honours which he had as yet obtained. It was under the temporary influence of this sort of superstitious dread that he received Eustace with that rapturous delight with which we snatch at a valued possession which appears about to slip from our hold ; and Eustace, without a key to the complicated movements of his father's heart, was greatly touched by this demonstration of love, which filled him equally with surprise and joy.

From the day that Eustace reached his home, Lord Llarnarmon never mentioned the name of his first-born, nor alluded to the sorrows that were

past. He seemed resolved to stand apart from other men, and not to share the common 'heritage of woe;' he would not submit to grief; he expelled it from his heart. Such conduct as this though surprising, is not very uncommon. Many who are capable of tending, with the most unwearying care and even fond devotion, on the lingerers in life, are seen, when all is finished, to dismiss the past from their minds, as the tale that is told, and unchanged in heart resume the common routine of life with a cheerfulness that is startling to those surrounding friends who awaited the effects of a destructive grief. And this is not the placidity of resignation, but the dissipation of all serious thought that, in a worldly mind, banishes all remembrance of that which is no more seen.

Lord Llarnarmon's treatment of Eustace continued at variance with all his expectations. His former asperity of manner was gone, and was succeeded by conciliatory kindness; the overbearing tone of command, so well remembered, was changed for one of counsel, and even sometimes of appeal. This line of conduct was, beyond all others, the method to enslave Eustace. Its adoption was a signal proof of Lord Llarnarmon's penetration, and was quickly crowned with success. He soon became satisfied that

Whate'er he did, was his, e'en while 'twas doing.

This was his desire. Eustace was no longer the impotent victim on whom he might carelessly indulge his tyranny, and vent his spleen. Formerly,

when Eustace had wanted courage to resist, he had not, therefore, been insensible to outrage; he had fled his father's presence. The earliest habits of childhood tell on the future character long, perhaps, everlastingly; and owing to the absence of a spirit of candour, and of a bold adherence to the truth, which deficiencies originated in the timid cowardice of his youth, acted on, as it had been, by a system of terror, Eustace never recovered a high sense of honour and rectitude in his conduct towards others, nor regarded with repugnance concealment or dissimulation.

Lord Llarnarmon now employed himself earnestly in scrutinising his son's character; he wished to make himself well acquainted with the capabilities of the instrument with which he had to work. The powers of Eustace's mind, the susceptibilities of his heart, the virtues and failings of his temper, were all reviewed, and judgment was passed on them. Lord Llarnarmon found that the first demanded a far higher place in his estimation than he had hoped or expected. Eustace was, in fact, endowed with a brilliant genius, and singular quickness of apprehension, though wanting in the activity that inclines to exertion, and in that self-confidence which is necessary to give readiness in applying the skill and knowledge possessed. With regard to his heart, his father saw that it was a stranger to any vindictive feeling, and that the tone of kindness he had adopted had already atoned for past neglect. His penetration enabled him at once to detect the existence of a quality

often unsuspected till manifested in action—this was inconstancy. The present easily obliterated all memory of the past ; the influence of those around him was irresistible, and the only difficulty was to render him the slave of one, rather than of all. Lord Llarnarmon saw that it was necessary that some one master spirit should gain an absolute ascendancy over him ; and he was willing to delegate this authority to Lady Theodora Vallenden, believing from the accounts he had received of her remarkable wit and beauty, and of her aspiring ambition, that he should find her both capable and desirous of participating in, and furthering all his designs. He came to the conclusion that this alliance might be even more happily effected by Eustace, than it could have been by Vincent, and at once prepared for its accomplishment.

All those characteristics in Eustace did Lord Llarnarmon discern, which it was for his interest to note ; but other facts no less obvious he passed over heedlessly, because he saw not how they could ever affect himself: he beheld without an effort to fathom the cause, the gloom and abstraction that prevailed in all that Eustace said or did.

Upon his face there was the tint of grief,
The settled shadow of an inward strife.
What could his grief be ?

This was a question Lord Llarnarmon never thought of asking.

CHAPTER VIII.

Ahi ! sordo e di pietà nemico

Destino ingiusto !

Perchè più tosto me non hai disciolto

Di questo grave mio tenace incarco,

Più che non lui, e più ch' io non vorrei,

Dando a lui gli anni miei ?

Lasso ! allor potev 'io morir felice !

PIETRO BEMBO.

Una donna superba al par di Giuno.

GUIDI.

It was Lord Llarnarmon's desire that the interval between Eustace's return, and a promised visit from Lady Sanvile and her daughter, should be as brief as possible. Grierson was aware of the necessity of giving Eustace a timely warning of his father's designs, but scarce knew how to convey it. Since their arrival at the Castle he had kept up an appearance of distant respect in his manner towards Eustace. He knew that any other mode of behaviour would excite Lord Llarnarmon's jealousy, and that he would immediately suspect him of paying court to the rising rather than to the setting sun, for nothing was so displeasing to him as to see deference shown to any member of his family, or any inmate of his

house, unless accompanied by an evident demonstration that it was paid through them to him. But when informed of the day on which it was expected that Lady Sanvile and her daughter would arrive, Grierson finding it so near at hand, determined to lay aside some of the caution he had hitherto practised, and to ascertain whether Mr. De Glynne was, or was not in ignorance of his father's views. He well knew that whatever impediment lay in the way, his patron's designs must be carried out; and his own object now was to enact such a part as should, by facilitating the accomplishment of the wishes of the old Lord, and shielding the young heir from impending danger, give him a claim to a reward from both.

There was little time left for action, for Lord Llarnarmon, scorning the idea of encountering opposition, had deemed no preparation necessary, or perhaps was not blind to the probability that Eustace's affections would more naturally take the desired bent, if no force were put upon them by suggestions or injunctions. The first step that Grierson took was unattended with difficulty. On the morning of the day on which the guests were expected, he sought an occasion to enter Mr. De Glynne's apartment. Pursuing the same part he had hitherto played, of a profession of most unswerving fidelity to his Lord, mixed with sincere commiseration for Eustace, Grierson began the conversation by an expression of the joy with

which he perceived that his master (principally through the satisfaction he derived from Eustace's presence) was regaining his cheerfulness, and becoming able again to admit of the visits of his friends. He alluded also to the peculiar trial it would be to him to welcome Lady Sanvile and her daughter to the Castle. It was, he observed, a visit paid under circumstances so sadly unlike those anticipated. Then first appearing to perceive that Eustace was at a loss for the meaning of his discourse, he broke off abruptly, and exclaimed :

"Ah ! I see that my Lord has never yet had the heart to enter on this subject with you. He has never yet informed you of the alliance that was agreed upon between poor Mr. Vincent and this young lady ?"

"Never," replied Eustace, with astonishment.

"Well," so it was," continued Grierson ; and he dilated at large on all the manifold reasons that had made it so desirable, and that now only embittered the disappointment. Then having, as he thought, said enough, he quitted Eustace, disposed to go no farther until the lady should arrive, and then to allow his conduct to be directed by the impression which the sight of her should make. Eustace, as soon as Grierson departed, betook himself to his usual resource in hours of more than ordinary oppression, seeking some 'green retreat' where he could remain unmolested, until he felt again equal to encounter the society of those who

had no knowledge of his griefs, and from whom, even if they had been informed of them, he looked for no sympathy.

The ways of Providence seemed dark to him, when he contemplated the lot from which his brother had been snatched away, and that which he was constrained to endure. "If one child was to be torn from my father in his old age," thought he, "why could it not have been he who was so little loved, and so little heeded, as I was then? I am too broken-hearted to prove any solace to his grief, to alleviate his cares, or carry forward his vigorous schemes. How happily might these have been executed by Vincent, and how must his manly spirit and his comprehensive mind flag and repine, when thus despoiled of the instrument necessary for their execution! And Theodora, what have been her feelings? Had she already known and loved him whom she was bid to regard as her destined husband? If so, shall not her sorrow be to me even as the sorrow of a sister? But how will my father support the sight of it?"

Such meditations as these continued to employ Eustace's mind, until the thread of them was broken by the appearance of a travelling carriage entering the park, which he knew must belong to Lady Sanvile. At first he was about to direct his steps homeward; then he thought that Lord Llarmon would perhaps prefer meeting them for the first time alone; so he turned again into the avenue in which he had been walking, and entered the

Castle only when the hour of dinner summoned him thither. In the room in which the party was assembled, he found only his father and an old lady, whose countenance and voice expressed peevishness and dissatisfaction, and whose manner was indicative of pride and of folly. To her Eustace was presented as Lady Sanvile. He looked towards the door frequently in expectation of seeing Lady Theodora enter, and listened attentively to hear if her name were mentioned ; but he only learned that she did not intend to dine with them. Their repast was a very dull one. Eustace felt no surprise at Lady Theodora's absence, and his interest was heightened by what he considered an evidence of feeling ; but he was astonished and disgusted by the trivial conversation addressed by Lady Sanvile to her host, without intermission, in spite of his abstracted air and serious countenance.

When alone with his father, Eustace felt very desirous to learn from him what degree of intimacy had existed between his brother and his destined bride ; but he did not venture to commence the subject. He would gladly have retired to his own chamber, rather than have again encountered Lady Sanvile ; but feeling that his father must be still less equal to doing so, he resolved to abstain from yielding to this inclination, and he was rewarded for his exertion by finding Lady Theodora in the room to which they returned.

Intentionally, perhaps, Lord Llarnarmon had left him quite unprepared for the dazzling beauty

which he was now to behold. The reputation of it had, it is true, reached his ears; but he had listened coldly until Grierson's narrative had inspired his mind with a desire to see its possessor. Although his imagination had invested her with many charms, he found that he had neither truly anticipated the character of her beauty, nor formed at all an adequate conception of it.

Theodora's form did not perhaps exceed the middle height, but the extreme dignity of her deportment, and the air of command which she could so naturally assume, might easily deceive the beholder on that point. Her noble brow, and dark and lustrous eyes bespoke a lofty intellect; the fire of her glance would have imparted a character of sternness to her majestic beauty, had it not been tempered by an expression of deep and earnest feeling that gave a cast of melancholy to her whole countenance, an effect which was increased by the extreme paleness of her skin, the creamy whiteness of which formed a brilliant contrast to the rich braids of her raven hair. The short, curling upper lip, and the faultless shape of the head and throat, not to be surpassed by any of those remaining forms of classic beauty that awaken the ecstatic admiration of the world of taste, added to the haughty character that distinguished her.

Armò d' orgoglio il viso, e sì compiacque
Rigido farlo, e pur rigido piacque.

The entire contrast which the beauty of this brilliant woman afforded to the loveliness of Clau-

dine, only enhanced its effect on Eustace. Not Circe's poisoned cup, nor Calypso's charms could have had more power of enchantment on the bewildered brain, than the attractions of Lady Theodora's beauty, refinement and wit, as he beheld them displayed in the first interview, had on the imagination and heart of Eustace.

Lord Llarnarmon, as soon he entered, took a seat beside her which Eustace had not ventured to take, and began an animated conversation which was ably supported by the lady herself. He now displayed a character totally new to his son, who had no idea how brilliant and how delicately playful his wit could be, nor how diversified his knowledge, nor how ready his memory; and Lady Theodora, who at first appeared overpowered with languor and fatigue, became enlivened as she listened to him.

Living, as Eustace had done, completely apart from the world, all the charms of refinement of manner, the polish of fashion and conventional politeness, had been hitherto unfelt and unconceived by him, and he was totally at a loss to account for the indescribable fascination of Lady Theodora's manner and person, even beyond her extraordinary beauty, and apart from it, that appealed with such singular force to his imagination. He listened to her voice with an anxious wish that not even his father might interrupt it, yet he felt unable to address her himself, and while he heard with assenting

admiration every sentiment she expressed, he was too much embarrassed even to signify how entirely he acquiesced in them. His presence seemed scarcely acknowledged by Lady Theodora, who was engrossed apparently by the conversation in which she was engaged; but he had no inattention to complain of on the part of Lady Sanville, who lavished on him every possible mark of politeness of which the time and occasion admitted. To any interruptions that she gave to the discourse, Theodora scarcely vouchsafed to appear sensible. Lord Llarnarmon, without violating his perfect good-breeding, contrived to treat her with entire disregard; and poor Eustace, rather shocked at the conduct of the first, and too inexperienced to imitate that of the second successfully, fell a helpless victim to her Ladyship's wearisomeness.

But while his ears were thus annoyed, his eyes were fixed on Theodora's expressive countenance; and no sooner had he left her presence, than he upbraided himself for a silence that afforded so inadequate an acknowledgment of his lively admiration, and felt that she must tacitly have reproached him with the extreme coldness of his reception of one who had such peculiar claims on his kindness.

Although the Lady Theodora had appeared regardless of every thing excepting the conversation in which she had been engaged with Lord Llarnarmon, nothing had in reality escaped her observation; and when they retired, she followed

Lady Sanvile into her chamber, cast herself upon a sofa, and appeared inclined to remain there, though Lady Sanvile looked rather disturbed by this evident determination. At last, finding that however tedious she was in her directions to the attendant maid, and however dilatory in her dismissal of her, her daughter waited with unwearied patience, she unwillingly assumed an air of resignation, and prepared to listen to what she was evidently prepared to say. No sooner had the domestic quitted the room, than Lady Theodora, raising herself with an air that seemed designed to silence reply, addressed her mother, saying :

“ You know, mother, that I am as well aware as yourself of the purpose of our coming hither. Let us therefore at once come to an understanding as to what our respective conduct shall be. I now tell you candidly that I will not submit to such degradation in the eyes of Lord Llarnarmon and his son, as must attend the display of your desire to bestow me on the latter. I will not unsought be won. I will not be subjected thus to become an object of contempt to a man who may probably be my husband ; and I assure you that every effort on your part shall be counteracted on mine, and that I will defeat every project you may attempt to set on foot. It is enough that you have brought me hither ; it is enough that I consent to abide here, and I have now declared the only terms on which I will consent to do so.”

Lady Sanvile looked dismayed at the decided tone in which her daughter spoke, but before she could reply, Lady Theodora had quitted the room. Her quick observation had in that one evening enabled her to discover how different was the course her mother was bent on pursuing from that which she had marked out for her, and she determined by this prompt interference at once to cut short her proceedings. Though she knew that her mother would be greatly incensed by this behaviour, she was also tolerably satisfied that she would not venture to act in contradiction to her injunction.

CHAPTER IX.

Io non spero giammai uscir di pianto.

BEMBO.

AFTER the arrival of Lady Sanvile and her daughter, the time passed swiftly on at Llarnarmon Castle.

Eustace, ever since his return to England and to his father's home, had regarded himself as 'a man crossed with adversity,' and believed that he had attained a state of passive indifference, if not insensibility, to all external objects, however fitted by nature to touch his heart or kindle his imagination. It has been said that '*l'indifférence fait des sages*,' and it would have been happy for Eustace could he have remained undisturbedly in this state of torpor. It was true that the shock he had received had for a time stunned him, and that he had felt his sensibility to pain or to pleasure deadened; but with the mere lapse of time, this faculty imperceptibly revived so as to become as much as ever alive to every emotion. From his earliest interview with Theodora, the past had been gradually fading from his memory, obliterated by the present; and although her sway remained still unacknowledged, it was not therefore less despotic, nor because unavowed to his own heart, was it

veiled from her penetrating eye. Theodora's character was invested with peculiar charms for him. Her very vehemence, often passing the bounds of feminine gentleness, pleased him, as it seemed to lend a support to his own vacillating opinions. To hear her speak with the ardour with which she ever supported the sentiments she expressed, inspired him with an energy of purpose that waxed weak as soon as her voice ceased to be heard.

Theodora was full of prompt decision, while Eustace ever wavered long between two opinions; he saw too much on each side of every question quickly to find 'self-satisfying solution;' and unhappily, even where his mental vision distinctly separated right from wrong, his habits of action were not so securely founded on the immutable rules of virtue and of truth, as to give this clear perception power to put an end to further doubt with regard to his subsequent conduct. The voice of inclination remained to be heard and to be consulted, and her dictates were but too generally obeyed. If this same course were frequently pursued by Theodora also, it was by her done more promptly, with less consideration, and therefore with less self-reproach. She did not temporize with conscience, nor attempt to conciliate it; the ill she did was done boldly. She refused to pause, or to deliberate, for she knew herself well enough to feel that so to do would render her incapable of executing many of the designs she formed. In most things Theodora 'dared no more than might

become a' *woman*, and a weak man rarely gives his heart to any woman who cannot dazzle him, either by brilliant gifts of nature or of fortune, or by the blandishments of art.

Theodora perceived far more plainly than did Eustace the entire subjection in which his father designed to hold him; and discovering in him gifts of intellect of which a more resolute spirit might have availed itself to shake off the yoke of control, really felt an indignant desire to rouse him to a consciousness of his own powers, and to support his too pliant nature by her indomitable spirit. Theodora though ambitious, had a heart, and prepared as she had been to look forward to an union with Eustace, when she knew him, and found that she could love him, the satisfaction excited by this discovery, imparted to her whole demeanour a softness and tenderness, that added a new and most fascinating charm to those she had already displayed.

A woman like Theodora does not often give her love and her veneration together. It is true that her lofty soul had an innate reverence and admiration for all real superiority; but her haughty spirit could not brook subordination. She could not, like the generous Portia, unreservedly declare herself

Happiest of all, in that her gentle spirit
Commits itself to his to be directed.

The ruling passion of her heart was ambition, and her proud temper had hitherto been exasperated by

struggling with fortunes far inadequate to afford it satisfaction. 'The steep when Fame's proud temple shines afar' was the position she coveted; but she was a woman, and such celebrity could await her only through her husband. She fully appreciated the talents with which Eustace was really endowed. She also saw his deficiencies, but she felt she could supply them; she thought that if she could rouse him and direct his exertions, he might become the instrument of all she most wished to attain, and she already loved him sufficiently to regard his career with interest, and to desire to see him the object of honour and of respect. With this fair prospect opening on her view, she was happier than she had ever yet been, and her heart, so often filled with bitterness by the utter want of sympathy and of companionship with those among whom she lived, melted into tenderness. The scenes of contention which had been frequent between her and her mother, though productive of little real disturbance to Lady Sanvile, had often cost her the deepest shame and regret; on such occasions, her pride smarted under her sense of self-degradation, and her better feelings caused her to experience all the anguish of contrition. She looked forward to the enjoyment of peace and harmony with a satisfaction only qualified by an incipient dread of Lord Llarnarmon's power over his son; but she was not slow to resolve that she would admit no rival near her throne.

Lord Llarnarmon spared no endeavours calculated

to banish from the mind of his guests all thoughts of departure from the Castle. Different modes of occupying the time were proposed by him unceasingly, and in all he arranged that it should ever fall to Eustace to entertain the Lady Theodora; that his services should always be needed by her, and always be at her command. Lord Llarnarmon received rather inopportunately letters of no small importance from an agent residing in town; but so much was his heart set upon the accomplishment of the scheme he had in hand, that after a brief deliberation, he resolved to entrust business which, at any other time, would have exacted his own peculiar and undivided attention, to the execution of Grierson, whom he accordingly dispatched to London without delay.

Sometimes in circumstances that afford little room for rejoicing in the present, or hoping in the future, in spite of reflection producing nothing but depression and apprehension, yet

Such in the midst of all distress
Is nature's need of happiness,

that the spirits will mount to a gaiety that mocks at woe, but still it is a most bitter mocking! Such was now the case with Eustace, weak, and miserable as weak. He did not dare to scan the future, nor to pause to look back upon the past, nor to deliberate on the present. He did not dare to listen to the voice of conscience that told him that he was playing false to his father, to Theodora, to Claudine, and to his child. He did not dare to

ask his quailing heart why he delayed to declare his real position, nor did he venture to demand a positive answer as to whether such a declaration at any future time was or was not sincerely purposed by him.

It is true that, on his departure from Switzerland, he had not neglected to provide himself with the means of receiving intelligence of the fate of the luckless offspring of Claudine. Such tidings were to be conveyed to him through the same native of Lausanne, from whom he had received all communications from England, during the time of his residence with Chénier. A considerable time, however, had now elapsed without his receiving any information whatever concerning his child; and he vaguely anticipated with a feeling that sometimes seemed to have in it less of fear than of hope, (though, it is but just to say that the moment he became conscious that the latter was predominant, he bitterly reproached himself) that this ill-fated child of sorrow had perhaps joined its angelic mother in her rest. Still, as he daily grew more sensible of the dishonour of the secrecy he was maintaining, he meditated writing a letter of particular inquiry to Lausanne; but he put off the execution of this purpose from day to day, until the conduct of Grierson on his return from London checked and eventually changed his intention.

No sooner had Grierson arrived than he sought an interview with Eustace, and that in a manner so peremptory and so insisting, as would undoubtedly

have aroused his lively resentment, had not all expression of it been curbed by his sense of the impossibility of casting aside the yoke that this man had been empowered to place upon his neck, by the aid he had lent him in the practice of dissimulation.

“Prepare yourself for the worst,” exclaimed Grierson; “you are discovered; both your real name and your place of residence are known. Your child is in England. Louis has brought him hither. Surely in your present circumstances, you will continue concealment at any cost, and my services are still at your disposal, only I cannot of course be expected to go unremunerated.”

Eustace could not but feel the insult conveyed in these words; but too eager to arrive at the whole meaning of them to pause to consider or to resent it, he impatiently desired him to communicate whatever fresh information he had acquired. Grierson accordingly proceeded in his narrative. He related that, in his visit to London, he had one day unexpectedly encountered Louis. He had met him in company with a Swiss courier, and he saw that he was immediately recognised by him. His suspicions being excited and his fears awakened, he had deemed it best to acknowledge the acquaintance in hopes of fathoming the designs with which he came thither. Having conciliated the friendship of Louis by a show of cordiality, he quickly discovered that he had obtained a clue to Eustace’s real name and abode in England. In

fact, the courier he had seen with him was his cousin, who had returned to his native place shortly after Eustace's departure ; and the curiosity common to that class of men having been awakened by the circumstances of the appearance and disappearance of the mysterious stranger, he fancied that he discerned some promise of a secret worth discovering, and undertook to unravel it, with a cunning superior to that of the honest mountaineer.

Having accordingly by diligence and craft obtained possession of all the knowledge that was to be gleaned on the spot, he persuaded Louis to take the child and to accompany him to London, from whence he was going to recommence his travels. They had not been there many days before the occurrence of the lucky chance of their falling in with Grierson.

Grierson had too much discretion to commence with an attempt to tamper with the fidelity of the honest Louis, but he thought he might venture to sound his more worldly companion ; he here found that he had met his match, and that he had no chance of securing him on his side, but by offering him a fair share of the spoil. He discovered that Henri's most sanguine hopes of success were founded on the discoveries which, by dint of unwearied perseverance, and the narrowest scrutiny, he had made at Lausanne.

Eustace, in the hurry and agitation of his departure, had left some trifles behind him ; among

others, there had been found at Chénier's house a seal that bore the arms of his family, which Eustace had been in the habit of occasionally using, and had left in an inkstand that stood in Chénier's library, from whence it had been removed and locked up after the old man's death. Eustace had subsequently missed his seal, and ineffectually searched for it, having entirely forgotten where he had placed it. This seal Henri had found in Louis's possession, and eagerly seized it as the most valuable clue to discovery which they had yet fallen on : so much importance did he attach to it, that in his first interview with Grierson, he kept its existence a profound secret, and determined to execute without delay his original design of verifying the arms at the Herald's Office. Having done this, he felt that the game was in his own hands, and assumed a different tone in his intercourse with Grierson. He immediately declared to him Louis's determination to seek out Eustace and his family, and openly to demand the acknowledgment of the young heir. The unsuspecting Louis gratefully accepted the offer of his cousin to transact the whole affair for him, under the impression that his experience in a foreign land, and his knowledge of the people among whom they found themselves, could not fail to render him far better qualified to conduct it to a close than he was himself. Grierson was not slow in demonstrating, nor Henri in comprehending that it would be most to the advantage of the latter to pro-

ceed cautiously, and by a series of intimidating measures to lead Eustace to make advances by which they might all in turn profit, and even the child, as Grierson artfully added, might not ineffectually be served. Accordingly when the time for Grierson's departure arrived, he without difficulty obtained from the two Swiss, a promise that they would proceed no further until he informed them of the effect produced on Eustace by the knowledge of their arrival. Eustace listened earnestly to this narration, and as he listened, he felt his heart yearn towards his child. He was now so near him that he could not but feel an ardent desire to take him to his bosom, and to clasp him to his heart, as all that remained of his lost Claudine. In this thought even Theodora was for a while forgotten; and then there came a vision sweeter still, floating before his eyes enchantingly, like a pleasant dream, or like a soft melody wafted on a balmy breeze.

Joy rose upon him like a summer morn,

for he thought he beheld Theodora with his child in her arms, her dark eyes glistening with tears of pity; their brilliancy was dimmed, but that liquid light was far more lovely. The harsh voice of Grierson grated on his ear; he started from his reverie, and bidding him allow him at least some time for deliberation, hastily dismissed him.

CHAPTER X.

He never held it worth his pains to hide
The bold all grasping habit of his soul.

COLERIDGE.

Taunt my faults
With such full license as both truth and malice
Have to utter.

ANTHONY AND CLEOPATRA,

WHEN alone, Eustace was much surprised to find himself less dismayed by the crisis to which his fate was so suddenly brought than he could have supposed it possible that he should be. The relief which he experienced from the prospect of a speedy termination to all his doubts, his suspense, and agonies of remorseful struggles, was at first delightful. He saw the impossibility of further concealment, and he rejoiced in seeing it and in believing that he was now constrained to do that which he wanted courage to do voluntarily. What means had he at present in his possession by which to purchase secrecy or satisfy the rapacity of these men? He could form no definite anticipation of what his father's conduct would be when he revealed this most important secret to him; reflection, though it brought terrors with it, could

not make him sensible of the whole truth, for he had never been acquainted with all the plans connected with Lord Llarnarmon's purpose of uniting him to Lady Theodora Vallenden; and could not therefore know how vast a fabric he was about to demolish, how complicated a system he was about to disarrange. In spite of a lover's doubts and fears, which had hitherto harassed him, he now allowed himself to rely on Theodora as on a woman who loved him. His conceptions of a woman's love had been formed by Claudine, and he therefore contemplated a disclosure to her with not half the dread, which that to his father, in spite of his desire to discard his misgivings, caused him. His better feelings also,—all of generosity, and of honour, and of tenderness that there was in him,—as well as his desire to escape from suspense, placed before him the fulfilment of this sacred duty in so satisfactory a point of view, that he hailed the close of that day, which was to be the last of concealment, with a feeling of almost unmixed joy.

But when morning came, and Eustace was again in his father's presence, he found all his resolutions weakened, as the hardness of the ice dissolves beneath the beams of the sun; and it was with a faltering voice and a failing heart that he ventured to solicit a private audience from him. The maintenance of a certain 'frowning state' had always been insisted on by Lord Llarnarmon, even in the bosom of his family, and he never relaxed from a dignity of demeanour intend-

ed to inspire awe. In the present instance, however, he listened to the timid solicitations of his son with a suavity of manner meant to re-assure and to encourage him ; for he did not for a moment doubt but that the subject of their discourse was to be Theodora, and he was beginning to be very impatient to bring this affair to a conclusion.

The hesitation of Eustace's manner and the incoherency of his language, agitated and alarmed as he was, for a time, rendered the facts he wished to convey almost unintelligible to his father, but as the truth began to dawn upon him, the fury with which he received it, surpassed anything that Eustace could have anticipated.

It is true that had he received equal provocation from a stranger, he might have been able to refrain from any outward demonstration of wrath, (though probably only with the intent of facilitating revenge, for he never pardoned,) but in the present instance, independent of the rage excited by the destruction and downfall of all his plans, he could not brook that the son whom he had regarded as in reality a slave, though it had been expedient of late to grant him a show of liberty, one whom he never supposed would presume to think, much less to act, in contradiction to his will, had by his under-ground work shaken to the very foundation, his carefully reared fabric. He could have endured it better, had its fall been brought about by any instrument in his eyes less contemptible.

No consideration of prudence restrained the vio-

lence of the rage into which he was surprised by this unexpected communication, nor was any virulence of abuse too coarse to be lavished on his unfortunate son. At length, he said to him :

“ And when is this communication to be made to Lady Theodora ? In what terms is it to be conveyed that will induce her to hear it patiently ? That heart which was yours will be so no more, for she is not a woman to love a man whom she despises ! Now go, Sir,” he said, “ and do no further in this business until I have considered of it. I would rather call to yonder boy,” said he, pointing to a child at play within view of the window, “ to give his judgment on matters of import, than appeal to you, who are weaker than infancy.”

There are some men too impotent for resistance or for retaliation, who yet can feel a resentment, the force of which would astonish their tyrants ; and one of these was Eustace. He left his father without an attempt to answer or to expostulate ; but his brow burnt, and his blood boiled with indignation. He wandered forth into the park, undecided as to what his next step should be, little inclined to allow his conduct to be ruled by his father's parting injunction, but rather entertaining a vague desire to act in some way contrary to it. At intervals, the weak man, sick of bearing the yoke placed on him by others, sick of being goaded on by the spur of other men's inclinations, when even contrary to his own, sick of his own vacillations,

makes a desperate resolve to think, decide, and act for himself; he determines that for once 'to purpose and to act' shall be one. Vain and worthy of derision are these impotent resolutions!

'Tis rising from the dead! Alas! it cannot be.

In this mood of mind was De Glynne, when the first person whom he met was Lady Theodora. He stopped, he hesitated, he would rather have avoided her; but she, when she saw him, came forward to join him with a readiness that he could not repulse. They walked onwards in silence, and Lady Theodora as she marked his visible agitation, thought to herself, "The time is now come. Now shall I listen to those words I most wish to hear. Now will he tell me that he loves me!" and her eyes beamed more brightly with triumph. Still he spoke not, and she looked in earnest scrutiny on his face. There was even a deeper shade of sadness than was usual on his brow, and a kind of gloomy shame that she had seen there before, only in a less degree. She knew that he had come from his father when she had met him, and she guessed that his stern tyrant had been trampling upon him, and outraging the tender feelings which she believed him to possess. She felt a compassionate indignation; her pride too was wounded by seeing the man on whom she designed to bestow her hand, thus despised; she wished to rouse and to cheer his spirit.

These thoughts passed quickly through her mind, and she was preparing to act upon them, when on looking up again, she was alarmed to behold the anxiety, the distraction that was painted on his countenance ; and with consternation and unfeigned tenderness, she inquired of him what moved him so strangely. He replied :

“ Lady Theodora, the time is come, perhaps you will say, is long since past, when I can no longer, consistently with honour, withhold from you a secret of the last importance to myself, insomuch as it must materially affect all my future relations with you. From the day I first saw you, you must have seen, you must have known, how passionately, I have admired, and have loved you ! Believing that this could not be, and was not concealed from you, I have dared also to believe that your conduct was not designed to chill my passion. From that moment then ought I to have revealed that, in offering you my hand, I offer little beyond the nominal possession of my title, and of these domains. Before I ever saw you, I loved another ! that other I made my wife ; she bore me an heir ; she died in giving him birth, but he still lives to inherit his birthright ; and I have only this day dared to breathe the secret of his existence to my father.”

Theodora gazed wildly on him ; she could not speak ; she was choked with anger and astonishment ; she moved her lips, but no words came from them ; her steps faltered, and she was sinking

to the ground. There was an alcove near, and Eustace caught her in his arms and bore her to it; then he brought water from the neighbouring stream, and threw it on her pale forehead. When she reopened her eyes, she cast a glance of inexpressible disdain upon the kneeling suppliant at her feet.

Oh ! what a deal of scorn looked beautiful
In the contempt and anger of her lip !

“Leave me,” she exclaimed, “leave me. I cannot forgive duplicity—treachery.”

She rose hastily, but sank down again. He caught her hand, and exclaimed :

“I cannot leave you thus, Theodora. I will not ask you to forgive me, still less to love me. Only hear all that I have to tell. I have no mean apologies to offer, nothing to retract, but much that I could say would extenuate my conduct, at least in the eyes of a merciful judge.”

Theodora had permitted him to proceed thus far without interruption, because her trouble of mind had rendered her wholly unconscious of what he was uttering. She was striving to calm the anger that possessed her, and to maintain sufficient self-control to preserve unbroken silence until she had framed some plan for her future conduct ; but when the word ‘extenuate’ caught her ear, she sprang to her feet with fiery indignation, and standing before him with the awe-inspiring mien of a sybil of old denouncing threats of evil, exclaimed :

“Do not stay to insult one you have injured.

Every word you utter, every moment that you remain in my presence is a fresh provocation. Begone, and ask no pardon for falsehood, from any but those you deem mean enough to practise it."

So saying, she darted past him, and was soon out of sight, for he did not dare to follow her. His love for her seemed deeper than ever. 'That power which a strong mind has over a weak one,' a power so unbounded, and so surprising in its effects, as to have been before now ascribed to, and really believed to be, the results of magic, was in the hands of Theodora, and well she knew how to employ it. It was the want of this power that had lost poor Claudine the heart of her fickle husband.

CHAPTER XI.

Yet hear me—not that I endeavour
To lessen or extenuate my offence ;
But that on the other side if it be weighed
By itself, with aggravation not surcharged,
Or else with just allowance counterpoised,
I may, if possible, thy pardon find
The easier towards me, or thy hatred less ;
First granting, as I do, it was a weakness
In me.

SAMSON AGONISTES.

SEVERAL hours passed before Eustace ventured to return to the Castle. He retreated hastily to his own chamber, and there remained until the hour of dinner, when he received a summons from his father, which he dared not disobey. He went with a beating heart, not knowing whether he was again to behold the Lady Theodora, or whether he was for ever banished from her presence.

She appeared no more, and he dreaded to meet his father's eye. He expected to find him enraged afresh by the rash contempt with which he had treated his injunctions ; but this fear was needless. He could not even discover whether his father was, or was not aware of what his subsequent conduct had been. The wily politician in fact, the first

burst of rage past, had recovered his self-command ; he saw that too much violence would defeat his purpose ; that he had gone too far with his son, and that if he rendered his yoke too galling, Eustace would strive to cast it off. Lord Llarnarmon was not a man to persist in error : setting aside what was past, he began to think how the events of the future were to be controlled, and to prepare for action.

The fact, however, of an interview having taken place between Eustace and Theodora, was only discovered to him by the embarrassment of the former, and the absence of the latter ; and angry as he was, he was somewhat pacified by perceiving that Lady Theodora had evidently not confided any part of his son's revelation to her mother ; it was still a secret. The unsuspecting dowager alleged no further reason for her daughter's non-appearance than a trifling indisposition. She had been refused admittance into her chamber ; but this circumstance was not likely to excite any surprise in Lady Sanvile's mind, because it was Theodora's usual mode of conduct on such occasions ; if induced by temporary indisposition of body or of mind to retire from society, in neither case did her mother's presence tend to soothe her. She had no confidence in her mother's judgment, and scarcely more in her affection ; and at this time she had deservedly excited her indignation, by her extreme anxiety for her marriage with Mr. De Glynne, which her folly had prevented her from veiling.

Lord Llarnarmon determined, as soon as he was alone with Eustace, to extract from him a confession of the manner in which his communication had been received by Theodora; accordingly he commenced his interrogations by assuming a knowledge of their meeting.

Eustace, too much exhausted by the miseries of the foregoing day to be alive to his present danger, easily fell into the trap, and quickly betrayed all that his father desired to know. Their conversation was, therefore, brief, for Lord Llarnarmon was in no mood to prolong it. His manner was throughout stern and authoritative, and without in any way recurring to the events of the morning, except to blame him severely for his disobedience, he left him.

The following day was passed by Eustace in the same state of miserable suspense. Theodora still resolutely refused to re-appear. His father also remained shut up in his library, seeking no communication with him, and keeping him totally in the dark as to what plans he might be forming. This day, however, was far more eventful than Eustace was aware of. Lord Llarnarmon was not inclined to waste an hour uselessly. The space that had intervened between his first interview with his son and his meeting him again at dinner, had enabled him to form a plan of action; but by the untimely information given to Lady Theodora, the difficulties of its execution were greatly increased, and might perhaps be found insuperable. He

could not prevent her from being in a measure privy to his actions ; she might even be able to control them, for he was totally ignorant how far she would be disposed to lend her power to abet his schemes ; how far he might fearlessly confide them to her ; in short, how far she would accompany him, and where conscience or cowardice would induce him to stop. That her influence over the timid mind of Eustace would enable her to carry through whatever he could persuade her to undertake, he felt assured ; but it was her willingness to act with him, her consent to be subservient to his will, and obedient to his directions, that he had yet to ascertain, and on these points his mind misgave him.

When he found, therefore, that his son had, by this repetition of disobedience, involved him in all these fresh difficulties, his anger and resentment were heightened to the highest degree. Still it was now his policy to refrain from all violent expression of his displeasure.

Another effect of Eustace's confession had been to excite Lord Llarnarmon's indignation towards Grierson, whom he considered to have joined in a conspiracy with his son against him. But though this discovery lost the man entirely and for ever any good will that his Lord might have entertained for him, it did not render the calculating politician averse to the employment of his services, which at this moment he needed, and accordingly he summoned him to his presence.

The haughty grandeur that was characteristic of Lord Llarnarmon, rendered any altercation with a menial impossible. He treated him with sternness and disdain, and in a few words made him sensible that all the transactions of the past were now laid bare to him. He did not permit him to occupy his attention or his time by offering a single word of justification or apology; what he demanded was implicit obedience for the future. "You imagined foolishly," he said, calmly and coldly, "that you could turn to account the secrets of my son; but you must have known perfectly that, in return for the trust reposed in you by me, your first duty was to communicate without reservation to me, everything that took place between you and him, and everything that you learnt or remarked respecting him in Switzerland. You have abused my confidence; let that pass. See only that you do not so again. I shall not repeat this caution a second time. I shall now inform you of what I require at your hands, and I look to you for the exact performance of my injunctions. Find some person whom you can trust, or rather, if possible, over whom you have authority; with such a person I would place the wretched child whom these Swiss have in their possession. His future place of residence must be remote from hence; he shall receive a fitting remuneration for this charge at my hands. The courier too must be satisfied. If the other fellow be too obstinately attached to the execution of his

first design to be moved from it, why you or his cousin must silence or blind him in some manner, and let him be sent back home at my expence, if he will. Such an act of kindness will dispose him to place trust in us. The history of this infant's birth shall from this moment die, and every precaution necessary to secure this secrecy shall be taken. Begone, and dispute not my words, nor presume to deviate in any measure from the line of conduct which I direct you to pursue."

Grierson left Lord Llarnarmon, crestfallen but yet believing that he saw the means of retrieving the error into which he had fallen, by the punctual execution of his patron's present demands.

Lord Llarnarmon had still a wish unaccomplished ; this was to see Lady Theodora, and that without his son's knowledge. He infinitely preferred the idea of addressing her by word of mouth to that of making any written communication to her ; for he was satisfied that the superior experience of years would enable him, if confronted with her, at once to fathom her designs and read her sentiments, and would lay bare to his view all the most secret emotions of her heart, however great might be her desire to veil from him the depth or nature of her feelings. He walked to and fro, impatiently considering how his wish was to be obtained. After a few minutes he approached his writing-table, and addressed to her a brief and earnest entreaty (which he commissioned Grierson to convey safely and secretly) that she would grant

him an immediate interview, and he suggested to her the means of making it so private that it should be known to no other inmate of the castle but themselves, in these words :

“ You can, if you please, leave your chamber by a door which hitherto perhaps you have never opened. The passage into which it enters will lead you at once to a private entrance to my library. There I will await you, if you will accede to my request. The secrecy which I advise will be calculated to place your future movements solely at your own control, unrestricted by any other dictates than those of your own judgment and feeling.”

His request was granted ; and after a short conversation the Lady Theodora quitted his apartment, paler than when she had entered it, and her brow was contracted, and her lip compressed as if in pain.

Evening came, and found the unhappy Eustace still distracted with suspense. He at length obtained some relief by finding some occupation. He determined that he would write to Theodora, as she still refused to meet him ; and by detailing to her all the circumstances of his mournful history, he hoped to soften her feelings towards him, perhaps even more than if her indignation were aroused afresh by his presence.

After much irresolution, and a thousand comments, he began his letter ; the mere occupation soothed him, and even were he never to have transmitted the paper to Theodora it would have served him well ; solacing his spirit nearly as much as

communing with a friend, by the power it afforded him of pouring forth all the stifled feelings of his heart, and of giving vent to long suppressed emotions and sentiments. And how much, now that his long silence was once broken, did it seem to him that he had to tell ! How his narrative flowed on ! Surely the eloquence of truth and passion must prevail. Surely she cannot read such words unmoved !

It was long past midnight before he was willing to come to any conclusion, and complete exhaustion procured him the blessing of a long and heavy slumber.

Miserable as he was, when he re-opened his eyes, yet at least he was sensible that a heavy burden was removed. There was no longer in existence that fatal secret which would interfere and interrupt all his meditations, and constantly oppose a bar to every hope and every design. He need no more lie down at night full of care how he should reveal the truth in the morning, full of remorse that another day of concealment had been allowed to pass, more awake to contemplate with dismay the task which conscience urged him to complete ; to ponder and to weigh the difficulties of its execution, and fruitlessly to plan and to reject a thousand modes of doing so.

The first thing to which he turned his thoughts was the means of rendering his last night's labours availing ; and he, not without misgiving and dread, at last summoned up courage to send to Lady Theodora the written history of his past life. He

waited to learn whether it would be returned or received with the utmost anxiety. It was not brought back to him, and the day seemed likely to pass on as the preceding ones, until Eustace on entering his apartment on the near approach of the dinner hour (not venturing to absent himself from that meal, from a dread of inflaming his father's anger, and exciting Lady Sanvile's suspicions), found a sealed paper on his table, which he eagerly tore open.

The words were few, written in pencil, and ran thus: "I will see you once more if you desire—this evening in the library. I have read your letter." It was not signed, but he doubted not from whence it came, and it filled his heart with sudden hope and joy. She had read his letter; it had softened her towards him; he should find her alive to pity at least. But what did that ominous word "once" mean? It was unlike Theodora to indulge in unmeaning threats. Was this interview to be a parting?

CHAPTER XII.

De pensées sur pensées mon âme est agitée
De soucis sur soucis elle est inquiétée ;
Je sens l'amour, la haine, et la crainte et l'espoir,
La joie, la douleur, tour à tour l'émouvoir :
J'entre en des sentimens qui ne sont pas croyables ;
J'en ai de violens ; j'en ai de pitoyables ;
J'en ai de généreux qui n'oseraient agir ;
J'en ai même de bas, et qui me font rougir.

CORNEILLE.

WE have said that the letter Eustace had written was not returned, but though Theodora received it, she let it lie for a while before her unopened. An eager desire to know its contents at length overcame the angry pride that made her look on it with scorn, and she had not proceeded far in the perusal of it, before she became wholly absorbed, and even forgetful of self, in the interest which it inspired. When she arrived at the end, she let it fall, and buried her face in her hands. Though alone, she struggled with her emotions, but in a few minutes she burst into a flood of tears, and wept unrestrainedly. Still if tender compassion were the first cause of her agitation, some more painful feeling seemed quickly to mingle with it. She wrung her hands ; her lips quivered with anguish ; she started up and paced to and fro

impatiently. Stopping suddenly she exclaimed: "Hitherto, if unhappy, I could pray!" Having uttered these words with a countenance of unspeakable grief, she flew to a couch, threw herself upon it, and sobbed and wept violently. Her sobs gradually became less audible, and were succeeded by long deep-drawn sighs. After the lapse of about an hour she rose, and with recovered calmness, approached a large mirror, and surveyed herself with stern scrutiny.

"I will not," she said in a low voice, "appear before that ruthless man whom I must now seek, with one trace of anguish or of regret on my countenance. He shall not exult in my misery."

She unbound her long hair, and smoothed and replaced its raven braids; she wiped away the undried tears on her cheek, but this seemed in vain, for others quickly followed in their course. She still paused and mused for a few moments:

"No," she then said, "he will be overcome, and I shall serve rather than injure him by taking a part in it. His father is remorseless; 'the oak, not to be windshaken.' If I fail him he will find another to be his instrument; better for Eustace that it should be me than another."

Again she wept bitterly, but she hastily brushed away her tears with looks of impatient scorn, swallowed a glass of cold water, and passing her hand over her brow as if to clear away every cloud from it, quitted the chamber by the door Lord Llarnarmon had indicated.

Who that had followed her, and seen her a few moments after, standing with haughty composure in Lord Llarnarmon's presence, could have divined the scene that we have just described? There was not a trace of suffering on her countenance, except that she was very pale; she wore an air of unruffled dignity and proud command; none would have guessed that she was a creature 'full of smiles, and full of tears.' The strength of her feelings no one had ever doubted, but the tender expression of them would have astonished even those who knew her best; and though in her own chamber she wept often and long, and even small things would touch her to the quick, yet when the tears were wiped away, no traces of them were to be observed. This power of concealment was a source of bitter pleasure to her. To weep alone afforded her all the relief she wanted; to weep alone was to her far more soothing than to weep on the bosom of any fellow creature.

But the time was coming when the fresh spring of smiles and tears should alike run dry, when she should but seldom smile, and when her grief should be such 'as passeth show.'

Beneath the studied calmness which Lady Theodora maintained, Lord Llarnarmon's penetrating eye detected plainly the violent turmoil within, and he almost felt compassion for her. Her proud self-command excited his admiration, and touched him far more than the most pathetic show of grief would have done; but the first words she spoke

were designed to exasperate him, and did not fail to banish all gentle feelings from his breast.

“Lord Llarnarmon,” she said in a cold, dry voice, “I have to-day received a letter from your son. In it he has given me an entire history of his connection with the unfortunate girl who became his *wife*, from its commencement until her death. I am come now to tell you what it relates, and to inform you what my future conduct will be.”

This speech was doubly offensive to Lord Llarnarmon. In the first place, it declared that she knew, and was prepared to resist his intention of extending his tyrannical sway over her as well as over his son. She was firmly bent on acting with him without sinking into subserviency, or in any way falling into his power more than he did into hers. For this reason had she not only received, but perused his son’s letter without appeal to him, and now informed him she had done so; and again, for the very purpose of galling his pride, had she laid a marked emphasis on the word *wife*; a title of which he never could deprive the despised Claudine. Lord Llarnarmon’s countenance grew pale with rage as he listened to her, but before he could reply, she spoke again, saying:

“I intend to see Mr. De Glynne, Lord Llarnarmon, and that almost as soon as I leave you. In our last interview, you told me to fear nothing, for that the child of this most unhappy marriage should never be your heir. So be it, if you and his father will it so; but on this point you must *agree*. You

deemed your dominion over your son absolute up to this time, and yet you have found yourself deceived ; you may be deceived here again. Your refusal to acknowledge your grandchild cannot affect his inheritance of his father's birthright. Eustace must consent to disown him as well as you. In this transaction do not expect me to mingle my counsels with yours, because I consent to see your son. I mean but to take leave of him, and to tell him my unalterable determination never to see him again as long as his situation remains what it is."

"Your conduct and your language yesterday, Lady Theodora," replied Lord Llarnarmon, with difficulty restraining his rage, "give me a right to require more than this at your hands."

"I think not," answered Theodora with the greatest haughtiness. "I know not what the result of this projected interview may be ; but I never bound myself to aught, nor will I."

Lord Llarnarmon waived the discussion for the time, and said :

"Does Eustace speak of a necessity for acknowledging this child openly in his letter?"

"He does not appear to meditate any further duplicity," returned Lady Theodora, with bitter sarcasm ; and she walked up and down the room in great agitation. Then approaching Lord Llarnarmon, she stopped before him, her eye flashing, and the crimson blood mounting upon her hitherto colourless cheek.

“ It is in vain,” she said, “ for us to try to play the part of dissemblers to each other. You summoned me hither yesterday, that you might obtain a promise of my services ; and you hate me to-day, because you see that I am not your slave. True, I will neither be your slave, nor your accomplice ; yet my conduct shall greatly assist your designs. Hope every thing from my interview with your son. He shall come to you when it is over, eager to hear anything that you can suggest that shall appear likely to conciliate Theodora’s favour.”

• Lord Llarnarmon, at this sudden and unlooked for change in her language, would have overpowered her with thanks for her proffered aid ; but she turned abruptly from him, and instantly left him.

CHAPTER XIII.

La plus brillante fortune ne mérite point, ni le tourment que je me donne ; ni les petitesse où je me surprends ; ni les humiliations, ni les hontes que j'essuie.

LA BRUYÈRE.

It would be difficult to say whether Eustace or Theodora felt most agitated in preparing for this decisive interview ; but Theodora experienced a torture far exceeding any that Eustace was capable of feeling. The agitation of a weak mind may easily exceed that of a strong mind ; but the intensity of anguish that the latter can endure, is not even to be conceived by the former. Theodora was troubled by the bitter truth to which she could not shut her eyes : that as soon as she should begin to 'act this scene of excellent dissembling,' which was 'to look like perfect honour,' she must descend from that high pedestal on which she had hitherto placed herself, and for ever sink in her own esteem, and in that of him who loved her. She remembered with anxiety that she did not yet know him well enough to be certain of the effect that such conduct would produce on him. She knew him to be weak, timid, and fickle ; that she had read in his story, but hitherto he had

done nothing very shocking to virtue, nothing positively alarming to conscience; and she did not yet feel sure that even her influence, great as it was at present, could force him to act boldly, and to defy sternly all soft and remorseful emotions.

In her hopes of victory, she relied greatly on the dazzling effects of her beauty to subdue; on her passionate eloquence to persuade; on her promptitude of action and energy of decision, and vehemence of purpose to sway; and she felt that these would be the means of establishing, for the future a despotic empire over his mind, if not now the means of separating them for ever. But at the bottom of all these considerations, it was the loss of her own self-esteem that touched her most deeply.

To have purchased the prize by any other penalty, she would have borne with joy any degree of suffering, bodily or mental. But was she, who had hitherto so proudly despised others, now to learn to despise herself? This was too bitter! she felt that if she desired to persist in the course on which she was entering, she must not again look on it in that light. And her pleasant dream of love and happiness, one of the few concerning which she had permitted her heart to 'dally with hopes of possible fulfillment;' was it for ever destroyed? Sin, the constant invader of every Paradise, was about to break in, and his stern colleague, Remorse, must for ever after be her companion. And Eustace, whom she had pitied and loved, was

she not now about to become 'a cleaving mischief in his way to virtue?'

The arrival of the appointed hour cut short these distracting thoughts; and she prepared to accomplish her task. She did not, in order to receive Eustace, assume that forced composure with which she met his father. She had undertaken to act a part, and she determined not to do so unavailingly. Every means of persuasion, every species of influence, she intended to employ. Her dress was purposely negligent; her long shining black hair hung in heavy braids on her snowy throat; her cheek burnt with a brilliant glow, proceeding from feverish excitement, and occasionally heightened by conscious shame; her eyelids were heavy from weeping, and a gentle langour pervaded her whole frame that invested her with an interest foreign to herself.

When Eustace entered, he found her seated in a mournful attitude; her face was turned from him, and partly concealed by the hand on which she was leaning; the other fell listlessly by her side. He approached her timidly; still she moved not. He sank on his knee beside her, and ventured to raise her hand in his; as he did so, he heard her tears fall one by one upon the marble-table on which she leant; he could not restrain his own, which gushed forth and bathed the hand which lay so passively in his. At length, she turned her face towards him, and it was with such a touching expression of reproach, that it smote him to the heart.

"Oh, Theodora," he said, "I did not expect to find you thus ! Upbraid me, reproach me, say that you hate me !"

"No, Eustace," she replied, "I *love* you ! But," she added in a sad voice, as if to check the joy that beamed on his countenance, "I sent for you to bid you farewell, and would fain avoid any thing that may weaken my resolution, or increase your regret."

"Good God !" interrupted Eustace passionately, "does such a confession avail me nothing ? If you love me, cannot you forgive me ?"

"I do forgive you : from the bottom of my heart, do I entirely forgive you !"

"Nay, Theodora," said Eustace bitterly, "this is a cruel mockery."

"Use not such words to me !" exclaimed she. "Forget not who is the injurer and who the injured. I will not reproach you, and you surely dare not reproach me."

So saying, she hastily snatched her hand from his hold, and burying her face, burst afresh into tears.

"Pardon these last words of despair ; weep not, my beloved ! reproach me rather : and before you banish me for ever from your sight, heap on me all the scorn I deserve. Spurn from your feet the mean, weak, faltering idiot, whose love never fell on aught save to work its misery. In your own strength, despise my weakness, or even learn to hate me ;—learn to love another ;—do any thing

rather than suffer for my sake ! I will leave my native country again and for ever. My child shall return to it when of an age to claim his rights. I will do a tardy justice to my poor Claudine, and resign every hope of happiness for myself."

As Eustace spoke thus, Theodora raised her head and fixed her eyes upon him. When he ceased, she slowly and thoughtfully replied after some minutes' silence :

" If it be Claudine who possesses all your affection,—if your heart be buried in her grave,—then do thus. But if not, then hear me. Yes," she continued, " there is still one resource remaining. Reflect. Which have you most injured ? Claudine or Theodora ? To which in justice do you most owe reparation ? You remember the injuries of the one ; but do you not forget those of the other ? Ah, Eustace, you deceive yourself ; this shows with whom your heart is."

Eustace was wounded and amazed by this language. He knew indeed that in his conduct towards Theodora he had dishonoured himself by concealment ; but the remorse which he could not silence for the far greater wrongs inflicted on Claudine, on her fame, on the fortunes of her child, by the falseness of the heart that had ceased to love her, all these things were pressing upon his conscience when he entered Theodora's presence ; and not until he had in some measure repaired these prior and heavier wrongs, would he have been free to meditate on those which Theodora

suffered, had not her very presence, the sound of her voice, the appealing glance of her eye, every gesture and every word, banished all but herself from his heart and mind, and rendered him as unable to withstand her sorcery as he had been to resist Claudine's unpractised charms, as ready to cast away virtue now, as he then had been to discard prudence.

“ Yes,” she said, “ there still remains one resource. Hear me calmly ; at least, silently, and then reply if you will. You saw Claudine with a heart unoccupied ; you gave her your *first* love (and in the bitterness with which Theodora uttered these words, there was no feigning !) You sought her, when she was in every way your inferior ; in mind, in station, in birth. Her beauty charmed you, and perhaps still more her love. You were banished from your own sphere of life. Perhaps you thought that your dream of love could never be realized in its cold regions. You had yet to learn that the sympathies of nature are stronger than convention's most powerful chains ! Had we sooner met—enough ! Claudine loved you, and you rewarded that love, for she was your happy wife. She was ignorant of your birth and station, so you did not on that account hear the voice of repining in your home ; but if she sighed not after worldly possessions, she was equally incapable of prizing those in which your real superiority consisted ; and the misery of both would have been inevitable, had not death cut the tie so

rashly formed. Had you brought Claudine hither, could she ever have been happy? Supposing that your father had ever acknowledged her, a supposition that never would have been realized, she would have been scoffed at by her husband's relations, and unsupported by him with that vigour which alone could have borne her up against them. You talk of doing her a tardy justice; but remember that even in this you may vainly sacrifice the living to the dead. She never knew to what you gave her, or her child a claim; she knew you superior to any around her who could seek her affections, but she knew no more. You do not owe to her memory a revelation of what you concealed while she lived. Is it not the same with regard to her child? Born in obscurity, what injury do you inflict on the grandchild of Claude Chénier by permitting him to remain in it? See to his welfare. Guard him against all the evils and hardships of poverty; but it is not incumbent upon you to raise him to a station which, when his mother gave him birth, was not even yours to bestow. Do not forget that when you made her your wife, you were the youngest son of Lord Llarnarmon—neglected, slighted, poor. It was not till after your connection with her was dissolved by death, that you were in the position you at present hold. Had this been otherwise, you never would have seen, loved, or married her. No, Eustace, you never could have known Claudine, but as Lord Llarnarmon's younger son; as his

heir, you would have held the same position which Vincent held."

Here she paused. Her eloquent countenance added tenfold to the power of her words: she cast

On erring deeds and thoughts a heavenly hue
Of words like sunbeams, dazzling as they past.

She glanced at Eustace to mark the effect she wrought; she saw that he listened not in vain to the 'tongue of hollow counsel,' and she prepared by a sudden change from her skilful sophistry to a passionate appeal to every feeling of love and tenderness in his nature, to overcome the little resisting virtue that remained.

"But why rests it with me," she said, "to tell you truths which should never have been absent from your mind? You returned hither—you sought me, or at least allowed your father to do so; yet you knew all that had preceded your arrival; you knew that I had been taught to consider it my lot to become the bride of Lord Llarnarmon's heir, and you succeeded your brother without ever revealing the fatal obstacle known only to yourself. You told me, Eustace, but a few days since, that from our earliest acquaintance your passion existed. Oh! Heavens! does it deserve the name of love, when you could deceive and betray the object of it? Out of your own mouth, Eustace, out of your own mouth alone will I judge you. You said you loved me, and you said that you thought I saw your love, and left it not unsanctioned. How then could you allow me to remain in ignorance of

that which you knew must finally part us? Had you no pity? No feeling save what was selfish? Even if the pangs of loving in vain were unknown to you, could not your heart imagine their bitterness? You thought not of me. No! you have never yet loved truly; love is forgetful of self, and you have loved selfishly. Oh! how selfishly! Eustace! Claudine and Theodora are your victims."

Here she paused again, and wept anew.

Eustace, pierced to the heart at the sight, started up, and paced to and fro, wringing his hands in impotent grief. He vehemently called on Heaven to witness how sincerely he deplored all the sufferings of which he now saw himself to have been the cause; at length approaching her again, he thus addressed her:

"The past admits of no reparation; who can recal it? It is too late to attempt to retrace my steps; but, oh Theodora! do not pierce my heart by implying that I am forgetful of your wrongs. I confess I never yet viewed my situation with regard to my hapless Claudine in the light in which you have placed it now. Heaven knows that were she still alive, I would brave my father's anger and the world's contempt, and hold no rank in it which she should not share. But Heaven's superior wisdom has removed her to a sphere far better fitted to her saintly spirit!" He stopped, overcome by emotion; then he continued: "All that I have now to do is, in sincere contrition for the duplicity exercised towards yourself, to

place my future conduct at your disposal. Show me any method by which I may repair this fault, and any means to remove, or even to alleviate the pain I have occasioned you ; and the sole remaining object of my life shall be the pursuit of the line of conduct which you shall suggest."

"No," replied Theodora, coldly. "I suggest, I dictate nothing. You know best your own heart ; you know what it bids you do with regard to the past and to the future. You can best judge how far your happiness depends on my being, or not being your wife. I have told you, that in your present situation that is impossible ; if circumstances alter, you can, if you will, seek me again. I part now with these words on my lips, which never will change till all else change beside ; Eustace De Glynne, I never will be your wife as long as the child of Claudine Chénier is your heir."

Thus she closed their interview ; she was proudly determined that the action to which she incited him, should be accomplished by himself, or by his father ; she would know nothing, she would authorize nothing ; she was resolved to offer no further counsel nor suggestion ; and if either past tenderness or present remorse withheld him from the execution of the act she desired, she was resolved never to see him again.

She ended, and her words, replete with guile,
Into his heart too easy entrance won.

CHAPTER XIV.

Le dessein en est pris. Je le veux achever.
Oui. Je le veux.

RACINE.

Di transitorio onor rispetti vani,
Che qual onda di mar sen viene e parte,
Potranno in te più che la fede e 'l zelo
Di quella gloria che n'eterna in cielo.

TASSO.

LADY THEODORA's self-imposed task was as yet only partially executed ; she was resolved to quit Llarnarmon Castle at the dawn of the following day, and she desired previously to have a clear and final understanding with Lord Llarnarmon, and to communicate to her mother her immovable determination. Irksome indeed was the necessity for these two interviews, but she resolved to complete all before she gave herself a moment for rest or retrospection ; her nerves were strung, and she knew that if she paused to relax, she should be unable again to restore them to their unnatural tension. " This day and this night for action," she said to herself ; " and then all will be over."

Accordingly she sent immediately to Lord Llarnarmon, to request to see him. He, anxious to know the result of her communication with Eustace, returned a ready acquiescence.

She entered his presence, with the haughty demeanour of a queen about to lay her commands upon a subject in whose loyalty she has but an uncertain confidence. He welcomed her in a manner even obsequiously affectionate. Chafed as her proud spirit already was by the necessity she had imposed on it of practising deception, she was not in a mood to brook patiently an attempt to deceive her. She hardly deigned to accept the proffered seat, and when Lord Llarnarmon tenderly grasped her hand, as he exclaimed: "Dearest Lady Theodora, am I to welcome you as a daughter?" she angrily withdrew it, and without condescending to make a direct reply, began to speak as she had already meditated:

"Lord Llarnarmon, I requested this interview in order to make known to you my intention of quitting the Castle to-morrow at break of day. I have not yet intimated this design to my mother, but I doubt not she will comply with it. Do not start in alarm; I neither have nor shall confide to her the real cause of this proceeding. As to my conversation with your son, I am perfectly willing that you should be made acquainted with every thing that passed; but it must be from his lips, not from mine. You are, from the position you hold, far more qualified to be his counsellor than I am. I have placed him in possession of my unalterable determination. My last words to him were these, by which I will ever abide: 'While the

child of Claudine Chénier is your heir, I never can be your wife.' If any change take place in existing circumstances, I have authorized him to make it known to me. And now I demand that never again may this subject be recurred to at any future period. I will join in no further discussions. Whatever you decide, I will be ignorant of your decision, and of your actions. This is my final and unalterable resolution, and on no other terms will I ever resume my intercourse with him or with you."

The angry spot did glow on Cæsar's brow, and though he did not venture to manifest his wrath, Lord Llarnarmon replied, with a supercilious voice :

"Nay, Lady Theodora, if the exertion of your influence has been vain, what inducement can I have to reiterate so hopeless an attempt?"

"I am not aware that any thing I said declared, or even inferred, that any attempt on my part had been frustrated. I bid you learn the result of our conversation from your son rather than from myself; and that silence, on which previous consideration induced me to resolve, neither taunt nor reproach shall pique me into breaking."

After these words she rose, and in vain did Lord Llarnarmon, seeing that it was fruitless to seek for any further confidence from her, then direct all his efforts to obtain a promise that she would defer her departure until he had heard from his son what she refused to communicate, in order at least to consult

further with him after his interview with Eustace. Her confidence that she had effected all that she desired, made her firm in her desire to depart before her suggestions could be put into practice, in order that she might entirely avoid implication in any following transaction, and be able hereafter to plead ignorance and innocence. She could not bear, with the hope of eventually becoming the wife of Eustace, to hold a place in his memory as the partner of actions he could never recal without remorse and shame. Firmly refusing, therefore, acquiescence with any of his wishes, she concluded their interview by bidding him farewell.

“Adieu !” she said ; “ Lord Llarnarmon, we part now, perhaps for ever. Let us not waste time in unmeaning and unprized expressions of esteem or regard. Adieu ! May our plans prosper.”

With a scornful smile she turned away, but she stopped suddenly as she reached the door, and turning back again, and coming close up to him, she said in a low tender voice, and with a solemnity of manner :

“Do not be too cruel to him. Believe me, I know him well now : too much violence would defeat your purpose.”

She paused, as if for an answer ; but he whom she addressed was in too angry a mood to vouchsafe any ; and with a tear dimming the fire of her dark eye, she left the room.

CHAPTER XV.

In all the omnipotence of rule and power.

BURNS.

LADY THEODORA had still another conflict. She had still to meet her mother, and could not do so without dread. Her anger, her mortification, her curiosity unrestrained by any delicacy of feeling, the absence of affectionate sympathy, all these rose up before her sickening vision ; she paused, and many times retraced her steps before she finally knocked at the door of her chamber and sought admittance.

Old Lady Sanville was seated on her sofa, perusing diligently a novel, in which she appeared so deeply interested, that not without reiterated supplications from her daughter, would she lay it aside. She listened to her with incredulity, then with indignation ; and her first intelligible reply was a decided refusal to comply with a request so unreasonable and so ill-timed.

As to spending the night in preparations for thus abruptly quitting a house, the possessor of which was her most valued friend, no freak of temper should induce her so to act. Theodora might, if she pleased, discard Mr. De Glynne, as she had

other eligible suitors before him ; but she had indulged her caprices too long, and if now her favourite scheme was to be thwarted thus suddenly, she would for the future leave her conduct to her own guidance, but should no more allow her humour to disarrange all her plans, and disturb her comfort.

Lady Sanvile spoke thus with the hope of forcing Theodora to unveil her mysterious conduct. She was very angry at the concealment of her motives ; not that she was hurt by this want of confidence in her child, but she was exceedingly displeased to see the whole of her scheme for her daughter's marriage completely overthrown ; and she was also a victim to the most eager curiosity to know the clue to this extraordinary behaviour. With a bursting heart, Theodora restrained her impatience, and attempted by reasoning with her mother, to obtain compliance.

“ Hear me, mother,” she said earnestly, “ and then tell me whether you will or will not allow me to act as I see fitting. If I stay here another day, I most solemnly aver I never will be Mr. De Glynne's wife. The only circumstances under which this can ever be possible, must be brought about by our absence. If, therefore, you are still interested in the completion of this project, believe me, your only means of furthering it, is to follow my suggestions. Let us depart to-morrow ; Mr. De Glynne will then see how much I am in earnest ; and if he love me, he has yet the means of making me his wife.”

“ I will not enter into any such rash and silly schemes. I see now plainly what all this is. That unconquerable haughtiness, to correct which all my efforts have so long and so vainly been employed, is again at work. But if your wish is to make your lover your slave, believe me, that will be better effected by your remaining near him, where he cannot escape the power of your beauty. *That* out of sight, depend upon it, he will be sufficiently free to remember and reflect on your faults, above all, on your temper; and he will not deliberately and calmly seek you again. I know that you think Mr. De Glynne a fool, but I believe him to be too wise to act as you would wish. At any rate, it is by his folly that you must profit, and my advice to you is to remain near him.”

The utter inapplicableness of this speech, and the petty strokes of malice with which it was replete, filled Theodora with impatient indignation; she hardly knew what mode of persuasion now to attempt; and yet she could not believe that her mother would seriously persist in acting in a way contrary to the wishes she expressed.

“ For heaven’s sake, mother,” she said, with as much calmness as she could command, “ do not detain me by this querulous childishness. If you ever wish to see me under this roof as the mistress of it, we must depart from it now. If you are willing to resign that hope, why then I confess the measure I recommend ceases to be important.”

These words frightened Lady Sanvile considerably. She particularly disliked to act any responsible part, and in her heart deemed Lady Theodora's judgment and talents at least as unparalleled as her haughtiness. Indeed from the first, she had never intended to have the boldness to act in opposition to her dictates, but she had felt unwilling to suffer this opportunity of irritating and annoying her to pass unenjoyed : for with all the littleness of a weak and vulgar mind, she triumphed in the infirmities of those before whom she felt her spirit quail ; and while her blind admiration and awe of her daughter's mental qualities prevented her from running counter to her opinions, and her cowardice rendered her unequal to withstanding her violence, yet as far as she ventured, she delighted in irritating her temper, and indemnified herself for the constant subjection in which she lived, by provoking her into the commission of faults, which her cunning had discovered to be peculiarly galling to Theodora's lofty spirit.

" Well, child," she replied, " leave me for to-night, and to-morrow I will think about it."

" No, Madam, to-night, if you please," said Theodora sternly.

" Why, I don't suppose that you wish me to lose my rest, and spend the whole night in packing and bustle for such a freak ?"

" As you will, Madam. To-night, or not at all. I and Parker can do all that is necessary, and you may rest," said Theodora bitterly.

“ And pray how are we to have horses here at that time in the morning ? ”

“ I have already dispatched a man on horseback to order them. ”

“ Indeed ! Lord Llarnarmon is retired now to his apartment ; how shall I bid him farewell and thank him for all his kindness and attention ? ”

“ I have seen him, and said to him everything that is in any way called for ; and as to his kindness and attentions, believe me, mother, they were not given for our thanks. ”

“ Well, child, you have taken everything out of my hands, I see, as you always do. You will repent of doing this, I really believe ; but I have warned you. ”

Lady Theodora walked out of the room without waiting to hear her final words, and no sooner reached the privacy of her own chamber than she gave vent to a paroxysm of anguish beyond control. On the verge of taking this last step that was to rob her of all self-esteem, with a kind of desperate terror she paused a moment to look around to see if there were no hand outstretched to save her, no friend to whom she might display her conflict of thought, who would patiently listen to the fluctuations and waverings of her mind, and under the semblance of advice, add strength to her resolution.

“ Oh, ” she exclaimed bitterly, “ that I had a mother who could befriend me, one whom I could consult with perfect confidence—one whom I could

reverence! And what would such a one say to me at this moment? How would such a one regard my conduct? If I could but love my mother, even though unable to respect her—but how love one so insensible! She asks for what?—for rest—while her child is in agony! Oh, this treatment turns my heart to stone! I cannot resign Eustace. If I lose him I shall be without one in the world to love me—without one to love. He and Theodora are alone; we must sustain each other. Let us cast all the past behind us, and freed from the baleful powers that have influenced our lives hitherto, make our future more worthy of ourselves.”

Resolutely tranquillizing her spirit with this specious reasoning, and crying ‘peace, peace, where there was no peace,’ she proceeded to prepare for her departure without further delay; and the day had scarcely dawned on the following morning, before she was many miles distant from Llarnarmon Castle.

CHAPTER XVI.

I see below some mighty one
Arises, mantling o'er
With proud defiance, and anon
Is past, and heard no more.

THOUGHTS IN PAST YEARS.

WILL any of my readers experience surprise when they hear that only a few months elapsed between the hasty departure of the Lady Theodora, and her return to Llarnarmon Castle, as the affianced bride of the heir of the ancient Barony?

Lord Llarnarmon had expressed a particular desire that the approaching marriage should take place at Llarnarmon; for within the Castle was a chapel, more ancient than any other part of it, in which from the time that possession had become the inheritance of the De Glynnnes, all such ceremonies as related to the marriages or deaths of the sons and daughters of that house, had been celebrated. The present Lord had too much pride to waive this custom; and Theodora, who felt that from the day on which she should assume his name, her ambition must be grafted on the same stock, and must not look to bear any blossoms or fruits, but as a branch of the same ancient tree,

assented to his request without reluctance. In her former home too, her sudden movements had not passed without conjecture and comment; and she was not unwilling to escape from a place where she knew that malevolence was exulting over her apparent defeat. With contempt and anger, despising the malice of the vulgar, and yet resenting it, she urged her mother to return with her to Llarnarmon. Lady Sanvile, after a temporary, or rather feigned opposition of her wishes, complied with them, and they commenced their journey.

When they came within sight of the Castle, Lady Theodora's countenance was overshadowed by a cloud; but that she might not betray her dejection to her mother, she exerted herself to support a conversation with a spirit and a patience seldom called into play when she addressed her. Still as they drew nearer, she became more oppressed with gloom, and at length sinking back in the carriage, maintained an unbroken silence, from which Lady Sanvile did not venture to arouse her.

Eustace was awaiting their arrival in nervous trepidation, and when Theodora entered the Castle, she was very pale, and seemed scarcely able to support herself. They were received and welcomed by the old Lord, and as his eye fell upon her, and read on her expressive countenance the signs of inward suffering, his lip curled in scorn, and his eye brightened with malignant satisfaction. This exultation was not

hidden from Theodora. The sight of it was sufficient to restore her to self-command, and she went forward to meet him with cheerful alacrity and graceful deference. Such were her ready courtesy and apparent ease in the acceptance of all the tokens of love and respect that were lavished on her, that Lord Llarnarmon was reduced to sustain the mortification of believing, in spite of his wishes, that he had been mistaken in his first reading of her countenance, and forced to think that no emotions, but those of a pleasurable nature, could have appeared on it.

Apparently, festivity and joy reigned triumphantly throughout the Castle ; the guests were numerous, and of the noblest of the land ; the entertainments brilliant and varied.

Nothing was wanting, except reality where there was only appearance, and happiness where there was only revelling.

Very different were the preparations made in honour of Eustace's second nuptials from those humble and modest ones that had graced his first ! And very different was the bride, who decked herself in all jewelled splendour, from the fair and gentle creature whose loveliness making her 'simplicity a grace,' had then stood beside him ! Not even Eustace, blinded by passion, could wholly shut his eyes to the force of this contrast ; he felt for a moment as though a veil were removed from before them, and he perceived that the heavenly Una was gone and the false Duessa, in borrowed charms, had

filled her place ; but it was only for a moment that he saw thus clearly.

The marriage was consummated, and from that day all things seemed to prosper with them. Lady Theodora's brother had now arrived at the zenith of his power, and all Lord Llarnarmon's most ambitious views appeared to be on the verge of accomplishment. Nor was Eustace incapable of entering into them ; both Theodora and his father found that they had made no false estimate of the intellectual powers which they had believed him to possess. He exerted them in the direction they pointed out ; he adopted their views with enthusiasm, and carried them forward with a vigour never before displayed by him. Ambition seemed by tacit consent to become the ruling passion of these three minds ; and Eustace and Theodora sought, by blindly yielding themselves up to the fallacious promises of its ' brilliant follies and its splendid lies,' to forget that peace of mind and purity of conscience had been sacrificed for their attainment. With Eustace, the visitings of compunctions were brief and unfrequent ; but Lady Theodora, though she had remained, as she had asserted that she would do, in total ignorance of the manner in which Eustace and his father had complied with her demand, nevertheless struggled with many more remorseful recollections than those that molested their peace. Eustace, as has already been plainly demonstrated, was incapable of long-continued suffering ; it was not possible to make

a lasting impression upon him ; he was by nature fickle ; he possessed little fortitude ; had his bosom been racked by half the anguish that Theodora experienced, he would have retraced his steps, undone the work of his own hands, and relinquished any design however resolutely formed. He was not, however, tempted to these desperate measures, for he found it possible to banish the past from his memory, and to live with tolerable ease in the present. That which chiefly disturbed his happiness was, the stern and continued conflict carried on between his father and his wife for supremacy. The arbitrary disposition of the former daily increased ; sometimes his pride was exalted by success, sometimes galled by opposition ; the difficulties that could not but attend the arduous tasks he undertook rendered him more harshly tyrannical at home where at least he thought he should exercise an uncontrolled sway ; and when he found an opponent even there, and one from whom he never obtained even the show of passive submission, the rage and animosity that sprang up in his breast were destructive of all domestic peace.

Theodora had little disposition to permit any one to usurp her place in a heart over which she looked to exercise unlimited control. She had not forfeited her own self-esteem to become a willing tool of Lord Llarnarmon's ambition, but rather to give full scope to her own. There was no unity of character between Lord Llarnamon and Theodora ; though their paths for a time ran

together, she never designed that they should continue parallel ; but when she was about to break off from him, and desired to pursue her own separate course unmolested, she found herself compelled to sustain a mighty struggle before she could recover her freedom. What most exasperated Lord Llar-narmon, was that it was not her liberty alone that she laboured for ; she sought to free her husband's neck from his yoke, and even in this in some measure succeeded. Lord Llar-narmon had the mortification of perceiving that his injunctions were rarely obeyed by his son, until he had first consulted Theodora.

It has been said, '*Tutto è grande nel tempio della fortuna, tranne le porte ; uopo è spesso entrarvi carponi ;*' and Theodora had bitterly proved this truth. Pity it was that she did not love true glory rather than false. She was one born for success ;—pity that the object of her pursuit was unworthy. She had an unyielding spirit, an energy that could not be exhausted or wearied ; a heart that could not wax cold or indifferent ; her desires could not be fickle ; her determinations could not falter ; her fortitude could not sink. She ought to have been great, but she was little. She ought to have been noble, but she had been mean. She ought to have scorned falsehood, but she had dissembled. Yet in spite of these aberrations she still remained so true to her nature, that her heart condemned every action unconsonant to its real nobility ; and from the day she entered on the

thorny paths of ambition she never knew a happy hour. So vigorous, so enterprising a mind should have been bound by the shackles of the most inflexible principles, and nothing but constant aspirations after higher acquisitions than any to be made on earth, could have sufficed to impart peace and satisfaction to her yearning spirit. Her ardent affections should have been set upon substances, not on shadows; and there could be no happiness for her until she had learnt that of these things for which she toiled and craved, she might 'eat and not be satisfied.'

A short interval of serenity was occasioned by the birth of a son, whom the uproarious rejoicings at Llarnarmon at once proclaimed as the acknowledged heir to his father's fortunes. Lady Theodora had, it is true, in the first part of their acquaintance given her love to Eustace; but from the time that her respect for his virtue was destroyed, her affection also was greatly weakened. Now the springs of tenderness in her heart were again opened, and with a passionate fondness such as she had never yet felt for any human being, her whole affections centered in this child. When she pressed him to her bosom she almost loved his grandfather for what he had effected for him. The pangs of remorse were again despised. Conscience found her feeble voice disregarded. Joy sprang up and exulted, in defiance of all gloomy forebodings, or sad retrospective looks.

Time past on, and brought with it change suc-

ceeding change, for nothing is abiding here ; ‘yesterday is not to-day to any mortal breathing,’ and Lord Llarnarmon in the midst of his self-gratulation was to learn himself, and to evidence to others, by how slight a tenure we hold our worldly goods ; how little they are our own, after we have paid the most costly price, even our own souls to make them so. Lord Llarnarmon then, in the midst of self-gratulations and the gratulations of others, fell sick.

Lord Llarnarmon had at the moment, he said, ‘no time to lose :’ he did not think that he was, and had been losing all his time, that he had never yet redeemed any of it for that sole occupation worthy of the heirs of immortality ; neither did he know that he was fast approaching the period when for him there would be time no longer. He only remembered that a great political crisis was drawing near, and that if he failed to be at his post all his influence might be for ever overthrown ; he had many enemies who sought the opportunity to ruin him, and now they would find it. On the other hand, he was told that if he rose from that bed of sickness and went down to the House, he would surely die. In a state of fury he dismissed his impotent advisers, and was mad enough to summon a bold empiric to his bed-side, under whose directions he was enabled to fulfil his design ; but dearly did he pay for his rashness. It is true that the speech which on that night he delivered, in defiance of all the injunctions of his sober-minded

physicians, was undoubtedly the most brilliant and the most successful of all that he had ever uttered in his whole career. He returned home exulting in his own success, and triumphing over his enemies; but before that speech had run the round of the periodical press, or met the eyes of half of those whom it was designed to influence, he who hoped to reap the glory and the gain, was gathered to his fathers.

CHAPTER XVII.

My wife—my traitress! Let her not come near me!

SAMSON AGONISTES.

Then there woke
O'er the dark hour the thought of guiltiness
In dread, clear vision . . .

. . . Then seemed the soul
Ebbing into a vast and wandering void,
And dark disquietings—a dismal troop—
Hung on the rear of life.

THOUGHTS IN PAST YEARS.

YEARS pass on—sickness and sorrow again visit the family of Llarnarmon. Let us return to the Castle, and penetrate with a stealthy step into that chamber where we shall read the mysteries of life and of death, where we shall learn to scorn the feats of ambition, and to dread the pangs of remorse.

It is Eustace that lies there; seemingly on a death-bed. Let us go and place ourselves beside him. The eyes of the dying man are fixed on the setting sun, which declines rapidly; with a thrilling, tremulous accent of despair, he exclaims faintly, for his strength is fast ebbing away (every heart-beat lessens it):

“My last day is come! And this secret will *die* with me. She will never let it pass my lips;

and when they are cold, never will she reveal it herself. Oh! that her watchfulness would sleep! Oh! that any other human being would approach me in this last agony, and catch in my dying accents the recantation of my falsehood! But no—*she* comes! I see her near. Leave me, remorseless woman! Beautiful beguiler! I have done enough for the love of you; I have sacrificed all peace of mind from the day I knew you. I have done enough for the love of you; let me now do something for my own soul, and for Claudine.—Heavens! what name have I uttered? Has it power to summon the dead to my side? Yes; I see her coming! How pale, how fair! Thus it was that she looked when she died, and I was not near her; and in her arms I see an infant—it is my son! Come near; fear not, Theodora sees not your approach. Come to me; place my child in my arms. Entrust him to me. I will right him. Shake not your head so sadly—look not so distrustfully; hasten to obey me, for I hear her come. Give me my child, and then disappear quickly, and silently as you came It is too late!” exclaimed the frenzied sufferer, who in his ravings had, in spite of his weakness, raised himself in his bed, and stretched forth his arms towards the phantom he had pictured at his side; “it is too late! I see her here: we are lost!”

And he uttered a shriek so piercing, that the very walls rang with it, and Lady Theodora was in an instant at his side.

Her real presence, while it banished all fancied appearances from around him, did not at all diminish the panic that had seized him; while it seemed to drive away the delusions of delirium, it was unable to calm the terrors of an affrighted conscience. She seated herself beside him with an air of cold, inflexible determination, such as might be assumed to awe a madman; and throughout the night she maintained her position, listening sometimes to his reproaches with stern disregard, but oftener still to the most touching aspirations, the most earnest entreaties to be permitted to unburthen his conscience before he died, and not to slay his eternal soul by sending him to his final account with all his sins upon his head. And his prayers were in vain! His murmurs, his complaints, and his petitions, had for a while ceased: a perfect stillness reigned throughout the chamber; and Lady Theodora, overcome with fatigue, sank unconsciously to sleep. The sick man slowly rose in his bed; he gazed on her with a fixed and eager scrutiny. What havoc had a few years worked in both of them! What a ghastly spectacle was he! While the deep lines of care on the brow lately so smooth and polished—the sharpness of the once delicately chiselled features—the silver threads intermingled with the raven hair—the uneasy slumber, disturbed by many a start and groan, told how much Theodora had suffered, and was suffering.

The countenance of Eustace assumed, as he gazed on her, a mixed expression of cunning and

of cowardice ; on his pale, thin lip there came an idiot smile at the thought of stratagem. He gazed, and then he sank back irresolute. Again he rose ; stealthily he drew one foot forth, and then the other followed, and he reached the ground. Nerved by terror and by feverish excitement, this man, who appeared within a few hours of death, was able to support his emaciated frame, and he arrived at the door with an unfailing step. It was open, and he passed it, and entered an outer chamber ; another moment, and he would have been beyond her power, and Claudine would have been avenged. His hand, his trembling hand, was on the latch of the furthest door, yet he felt unable to raise it. He continued his efforts, when they were suddenly arrested by the unlooked-for appearance of Lady Theodora, advancing towards him. Her flashing eyes and threatening mien awed him at once into submission ; his hand loosened its hold, and watching her stern looks, and unable to withdraw his gaze from meeting hers, he slowly began to retrace his steps, as she advanced, and intercepting his passage to the door, and then followed his retreat with unrelaxed determination. Neither uttered a single word, not a threat nor an expostulation ; terror was in the heart of both ; no sooner did Eustace reach his bed, than he fell across it with a groan. Theodora darted forward to catch him, and found him insensible ; tenderly she raised him, and replaced him on his couch, and sought with a ready hand every means of restoring him to con-

sciousness. So death-like was the swoon into which he had fallen, that she suddenly stopped short, and suspending her efforts, wildly wrung her hands with gestures of most unspeakable horror. A thought crossed her mind; she flew to the table, and snatching up the mirror, ran with it, and placed it before his lips. The faint cloud of breath that then appeared on it, calmed her utter despair, and by the use of fresh stimulants she at length succeeded in recalling him to life.

She resumed the station which she had never relinquished since the dangerous character of his malady had become known to her, never quitting it but to enter into the outer chamber, from whence she could hear his slightest motion. There she had received all the visits of the physician, and recorded her attention to any demands on it of a peremptory nature.

Towards the dawn of day, Lady Theodora plainly discerned in Eustace an appalling change. Quitting his side, she went into the other chamber and caused the physician to be instantly summoned. She did not lay aside even to him that stern rigidity of manner beneath which she had, from the commencement of her task, veiled the almost unendurable anguish of her spirit. She addressed him thus:

“I have already told you, that if the utmost exertion of your skill can avail to prolong Lord Llarnarmon’s existence, there is no reward that you can ask at our hands that shall not cheerfully

be given. But I command you not to attempt to deceive me, but to the best of your knowledge to inform me of what appears to you the truth."

The physician, who had found himself hitherto completely baffled in his attempts to read the workings of Lady Llarnarmon's mind, and yet nevertheless had never been able entirely to divest himself of a vague suspicion that some secret treachery was being practised on his unhappy patient, replied angrily, forgetting his usual courtesy, for he had even more than the usual blandness of manner to be found in the members of his profession:

"It has, Madam, as I have told you plainly before, always appeared to me that uneasiness of mind has operated very injuriously in Lord Llarnarmon's case."

Lady Llarnarmon grew, if possible, even paler than she had been before, as she heard these words; but no other change appeared in her. She remained quite motionless for a few moments, and then coming close to him, uttered in a low whisper, but every word of which was audible:

"Is he dying? I insist on knowing."

Her eyes were fixed on the physician as she waited his reply with so intense a gaze, that involuntarily awed by her impressive manner, he replied hurriedly, scarcely knowing what words were passing his lips:

"He is dying."

"Nothing could save him now?"

“Nothing.”

“Then begone!” uttered Lady Llarnarmon in a voice so thrilling, so stern, that the physician started as he heard it.

In another moment she was again beside the bed of Eustace. She found him speechless; his eyes still open had lost every ray of intelligence, and no longer the beseeching gaze spoke daggers to her heart. She now permitted the physician and her attendants to come to her assistance. In a few, in a very few hours the last struggle was over, and the miserable Lady Llarnarmon was borne insensible to a chamber as remote as possible from the scene of her late sufferings.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Bootless are complaints, and cureless are my wounds.

* * * * *

Woe above woe ! grief more than common grief.

SHAKSPEARE.

THE state of Lady Llarnarmon, for many days after the fatal termination of her husband's sufferings, was such as to induce the physician who had attended him, to remain at the Castle in order to employ every effort to avert the effects of a grief which seemed to threaten her reason, or her life. Among the relatives of the respective families of Llarnarmon and Sanvile, whom this terrible visitation summoned to the Castle to attend the last honours that could be paid to the departed, was a gentleman of the name of Dormer, who had married a near relation of Lady Theodora, and her most intimate friend both previously to and after her marriage. This lady had desired to fly to her support immediately that she heard of the dreadful trial that had befallen her ; but on her arrival at the Castle, she found herself absolutely excluded from her presence.

Lady Esther Dormer at first submitted in silence to the injunctions for her banishment, which she was told that Lady Llarnarmon had exerted herself

to give in the most peremptory manner; but at length her alarm was so seriously excited by the successive reports brought her, that she meditated forcing herself into her apartment, hoping that if her forbidden presence awoke no other feeling than resentment, even that might prove salutary, and arouse her from the dreadful stillness of despair in which the physician described her as lying. He was so much at a loss how to proceed with one so intractable as Lady Llarnarmon, that he listened with pleasure to Lady Esther's proposal to come to his assistance, and approved of a farther project which she suggested of bearing with her to his mother's bosom, the little Theodore whom she had never beheld since his father's death. With Mr. Dormer's consent; she accordingly proceeded to execute her plan, but she could not set about it without much trepidation, as taking the beautiful child in her arms, she proceeded to the apartments of her friend.

Here an unthought-of and apparently insuperable difficulty met her, and filled her with dismay. The door of the chamber in which was Lady Llarnarmon, was fastened!

"Good God!" exclaimed Lady Esther, in great alarm; "is it possible that she is allowed to remain thus totally alone, and in her own power, in such a state of mind as she is! You are mad!" she said, turning to the frightened attendants, who all looked aghast at her vehement rebuke. "The door must be forced—we must enter—"

Lady Esther for a moment stood thoughtfully, and the child being terrified by the looks of those around him, began to cry. A new idea suddenly flashed across Lady Esther's mind, and bidding every one to retire instantly, she approached the door, placed the child by it, and soothing him by her caresses, persuaded him to knock, and call upon his mother. Her design was before long effected. She heard an approaching step; the door was unfastened, it was thrown open, and Lady Llarnarmon stood before them. She was clad in black from head to foot, and her appearance was so ghastly, and so stern, that Lady Esther shrank back appalled in spite of herself. Totally regardless of her presence, or her motions, Lady Theodora advanced towards her child, and would have taken him in her arms, but the boy, terrified at the suddenness of her appearance, and the mournfulness of her garb, drew back, and repulsing her with screams, clung to Lady Esther. His mother stopped short, and gazing on the child with an air of frantic horror and despair, cast her arms wildly over her head, and retreating backwards into the chamber, muttering in a voice that scarcely reached Lady Esther's ears; "He repels me!" stumbled, and fell with a groan.

Lady Esther started forward, and calling for aid, raised her, and supported her to a sofa. For a few moments after she was placed there, she did not uncloset her eyes; but Lady Esther, to her great joy, perceived that tears were gathering beneath

their lids, and forcing their way through the long lashes that fringed them. Lady Llarnarmon, though evidently retaining consciousness, did not give the slightest token of recognition of Lady Esther, who kneeling beside her with Theodore in her arms, had soothed him into silence, and prevailed on him to let her place him on his mother's bosom. The child, who now knew his mother, made no opposition, and she received his caresses with fondness and tears ; at the same time turning away from Lady Esther with evident displeasure. After the lapse of a few minutes, she exerted herself sufficiently to raise herself up, and addressed, in a voice of command, the domestics who still lingered around, saying :

“Leave me, and leave Lord Llarnarmon with me.” Her voice was so harsh, that it startled Lady Esther, who felt that her banishment was meant to be included in the sentence, and frightened the child anew ; so that as all around retreated, he again screamed to Lady Esther, who had won his little heart by her tender care of him. His mother, for a moment, strove to pacify him ; but finding her endeavours vain, she called in a tone of the most passionate anger to one of the servants, and commanded her to take him away. Lady Esther stopped, and turned to the child, who stretched out his little hands to her, when Lady Theodora with furious vehemence, exclaimed :

“No, no, do not touch him ; you have taught him to hate me ; you shall not take him.”

Lady Esther, wounded to the quick, and shocked at the anguish with which the unhappy woman spoke, ran hastily back to her side, and throwing herself on the ground beside her, cast her arms tenderly around her, and burst into tears, exclaiming :

“Theodora, Theodora, in what have I offended you? Do not be so cruel to me. Am I not your own friend? If you have forgotten me, and ceased to love me—if this terrible blow has obliterated all memory of the past in your heart, still it cannot be so with me. I am come to be with you, to nurse you, to watch beside you, to be careful of you and of your child. I will not ask for the fondness you showed me in other days ; only do not send me away from you. Let me stay.”

These tender words were not without effect. Lady Theodora, who had at first struggled to disengage herself, at last passively allowed her friend to retain her hand, and suddenly casting herself on her bosom, burst into a flood of tears that afforded her more relief than any she had yet shed.

From that hour she no longer repulsed Lady Esther’s affectionate advances. She yielded to her tender solicitations, and seemed to derive consolation from her society. Sometimes, however, her mood would suddenly change in a manner wholly inexplicable to the shrewdest reader of the human heart; for who could discern the secret cause of the intolerable bitterness of spirit that would at times force her to recoil upon herself, and rush back into

solitude ; that would make her shrink with horror from the embrace of her friend, when receiving any new proof of her love ? It was the consciousness that she was all along deceiving her, and perhaps the thought : “ a day will come when she will be called on to pay a heavy penalty for having loved a sinful one. My crimes will meet their punishment, and the love that made her sympathize in my sorrows, will constrain her to share my sufferings.”

In this frame of mind she would bitterly repent not having declined all attempts on the part of Lady Esther to form an union of friendship between them ; but when these transitory fits of remorse subsided, she would seek her again, and thankfully allow her to pour balm into such of her wounds as were visible ; but the most deadly were beyond the reach of human eye or aid.

Llarnarmon Castle, as a residence, became odious to her. Lady Esther, whose health was very precarious was about to visit the continent, and Lady Theodora lent a willing ear to her solicitations to accompany her.

Lady Llarnarmon took her infant son with her ; her friend had a daughter of the same age ; and in the retirement which the health of the one, and the grief of the other, led them to prefer, these children afforded a most interesting occupation to their time and hearts.

In his tenth year the young Lord Llarnarmon was removed to England to pursue his education. His health and constitution were too feeble to

admit of sending him to any public school, and his mother confided him to the care of a friend of his father's, for whom she entertained a well-grounded esteem. This was a clergyman, Mr. Mordaunt, who, as we have already mentioned, had been the companion of Eustace at Lausanne.

From that time Lady Llarnarmon varied her place of residence continually, seldom coming to England, and generally taking up her abode with her friends the Dormers, who resided on the continent.

END OF VOL. II.

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